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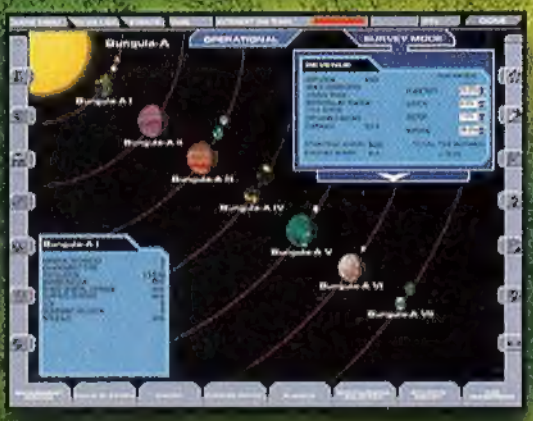

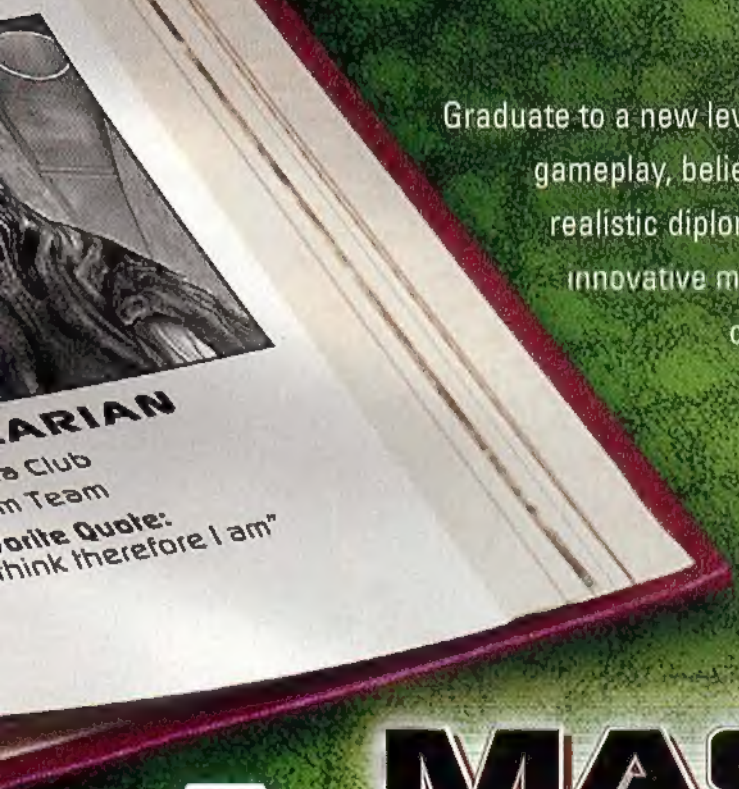

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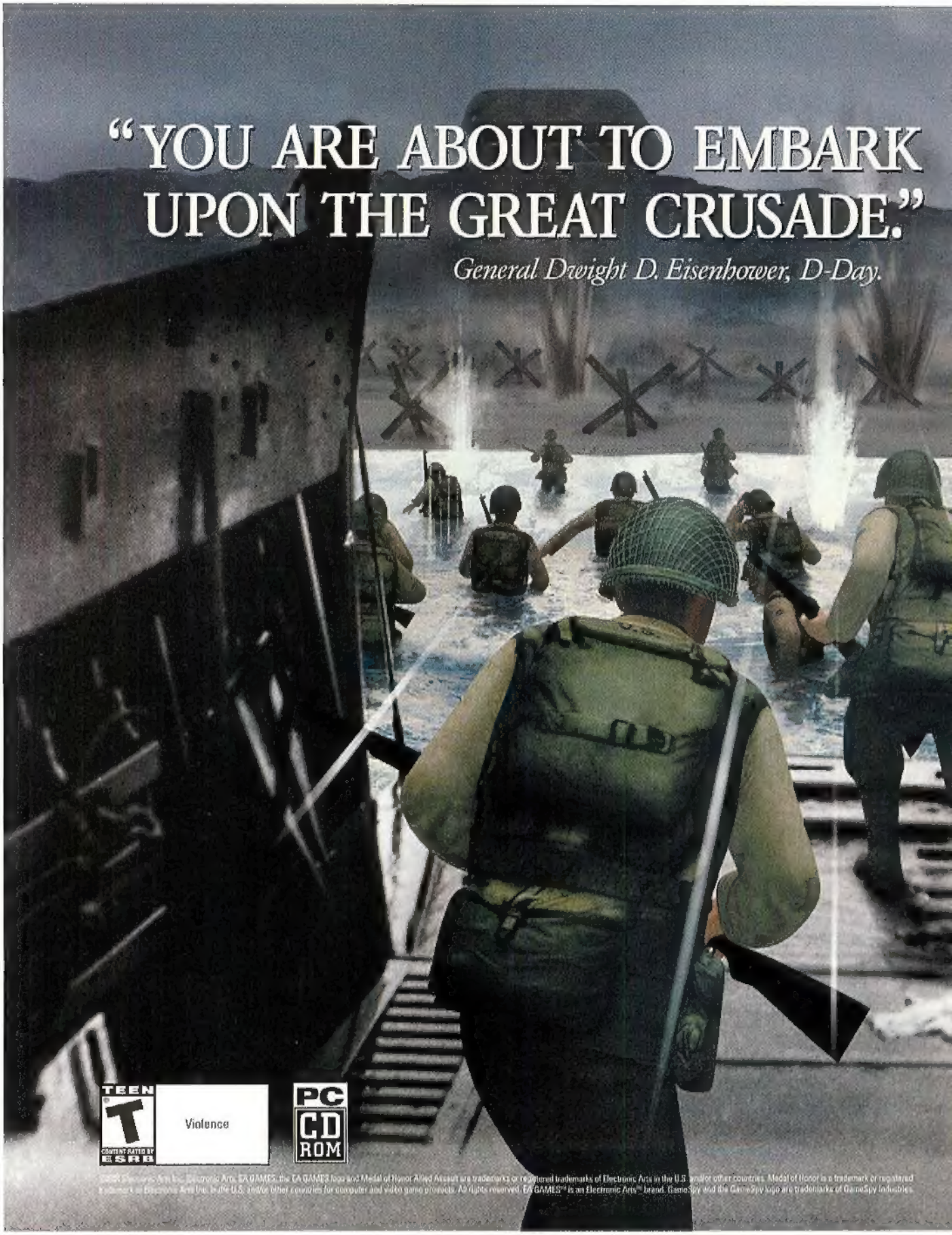

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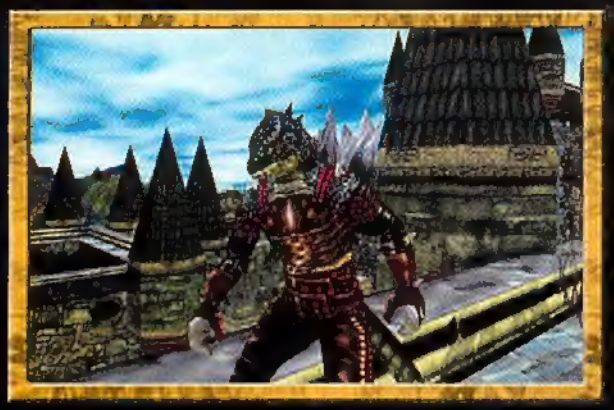

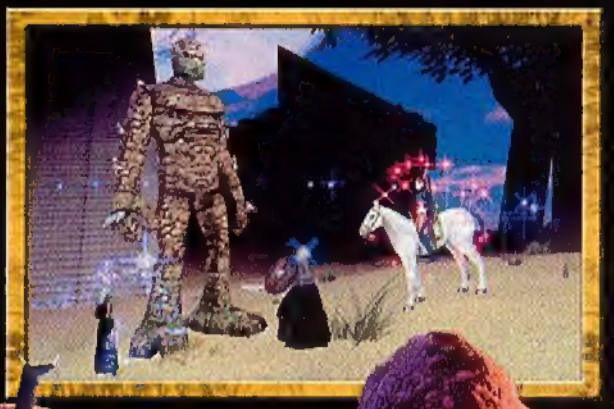

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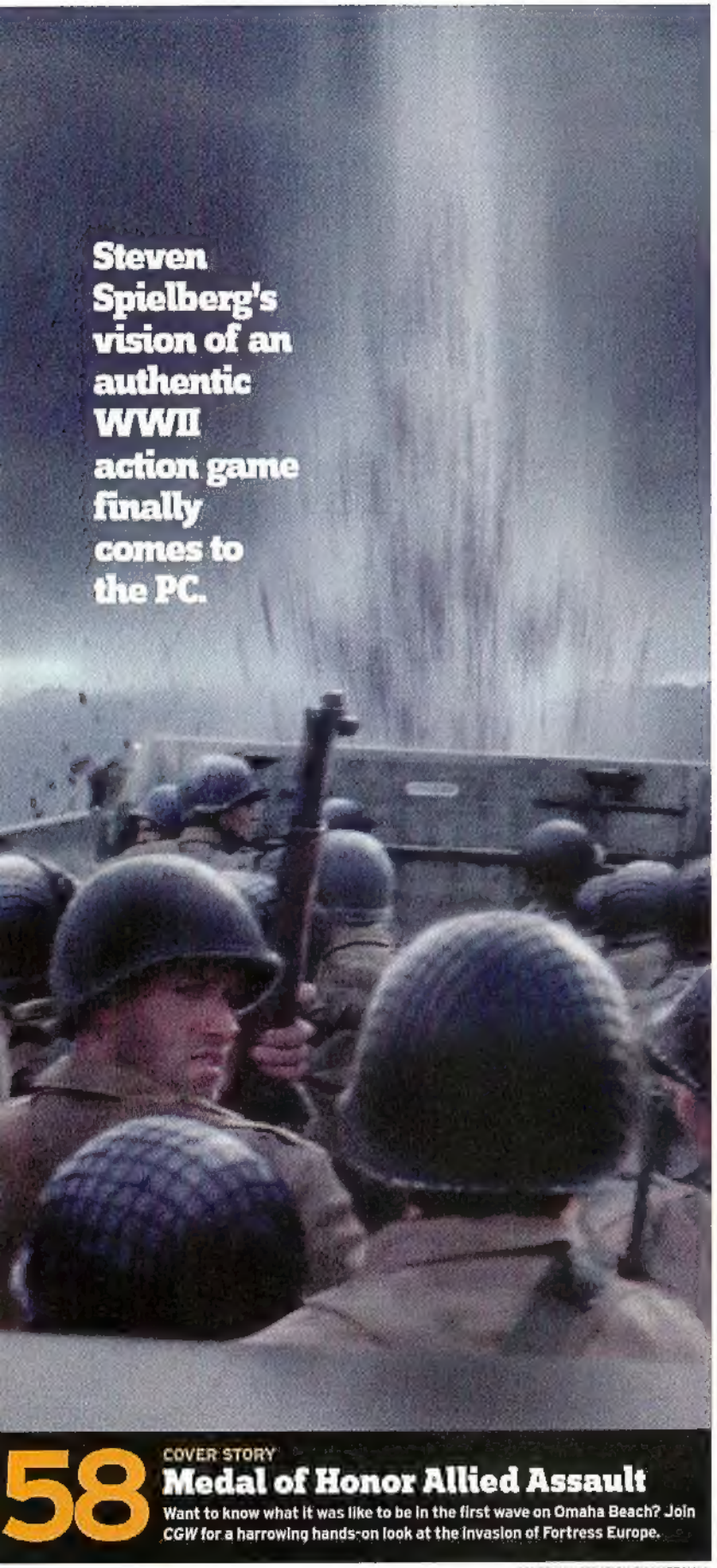

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Medal of Honor Allied Assault
Want to know what it was like to be in the first wave on Omaha Beach? Join *CGW* for a harrowing hands-on look at the invasion of Fortress Europe.

COVER ILLUSTRATION BY MATT HALL

15 Editorial
Erstwhile Editor-in-Chief George Jones returns to give us the dope on the new and improved *CGW* Website.

17 Letters
You love us, you love us not. Damn, we always end on that one.

26 Loading...
Hope you didn't overindulge on the gingerbread Jeff Greens this Xmas, 'cause we have a big basket of eye candy for you to fill up on, with exclusive screens of **Counter-Strike: Condition Zero, Soldier of Fortune II: Double Helix,** and **Zoo Tycoon.**

34 Read Me
Take a guided-missile tour of PC gaming with our hands-on looks at the hottest upcoming games. Plus another installment of Scott McCloud's "Discovering Games" series, Pipeline, and keen gaming analysis from a bunch of mental midgets.

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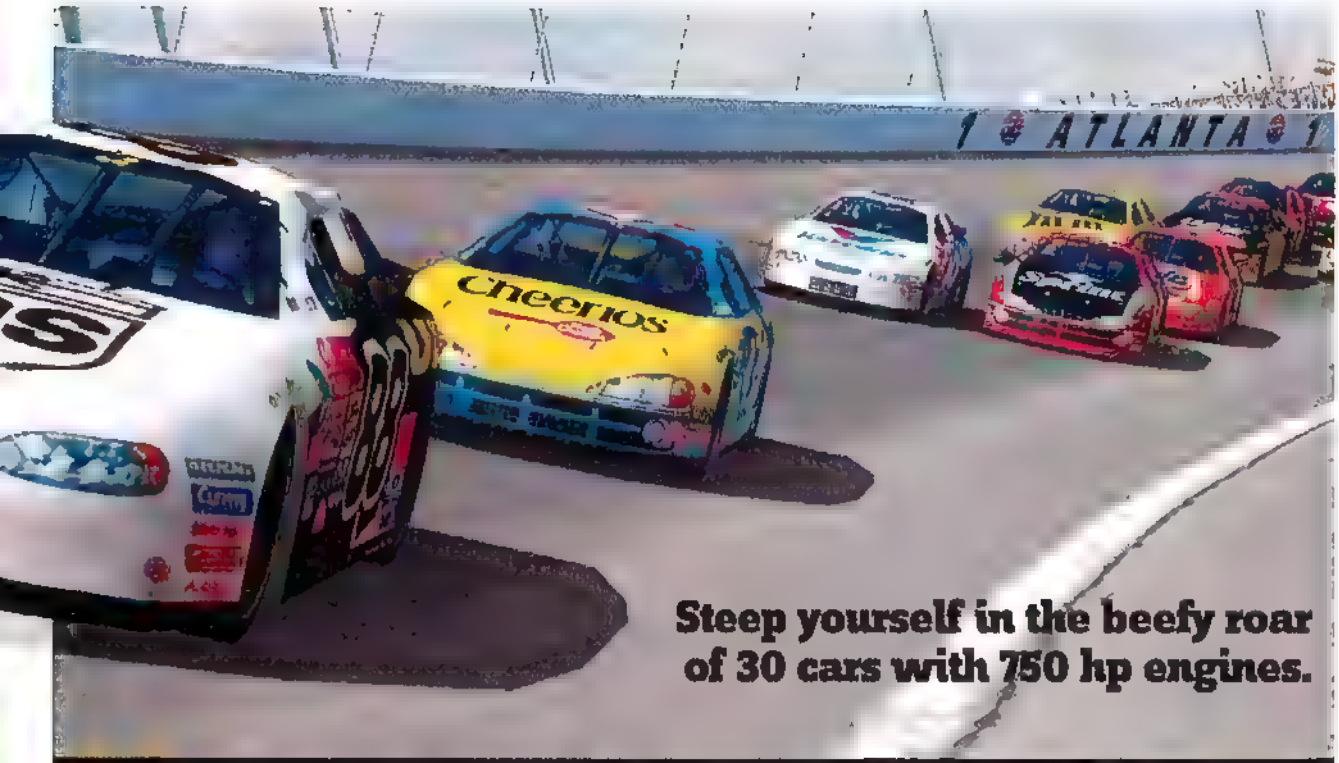
Twice a year the *CGW* staff delouses and dons ceremonial robes for the mystical ritual that is the Hall of Fame induction. This month, two worthy games and a legendary designer join the pantheon.

104 Tech
Our Tech section's got that fire, kid! Peep at our graphics card roundup and some of the best reviews ever! Also, Tech Medics, Killer Rigs, how to put a system together, and—don't forget—Wil Power.

121 Gamer's Edge
Get the inside scoop on **Kohan: Ahriman's Gift,** plus tips from Prima on **AvP2.** Also, we have a newbie's guide to **Dark Age of Camelot, Civ III** questions and answers, and **Commandos 2** tricks.

136 Greenspeak
This column was so late, it almost appeared next month.



Steep yourself in the beefy roar of 30 cars with 750 hp engines.

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Vivendi prepares yet another installment in its successful *NASCAR Racing* series.

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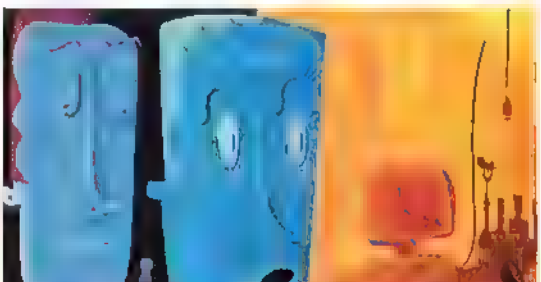

34 READ ME
Whoa, dude! The party is over at EA.com.

107 LOGITECH MOMO FORCE
On your marks, get set...

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"9.1 Superb ... Dark Age of Camelot surpasses any such game to date and promises to remain the finest in its class for a long time"
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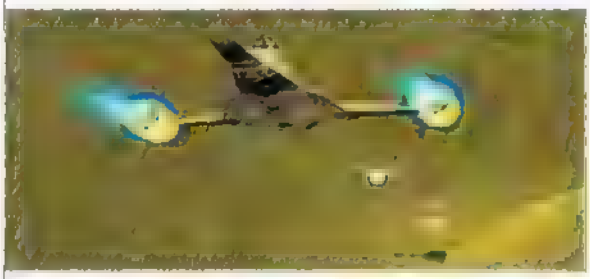

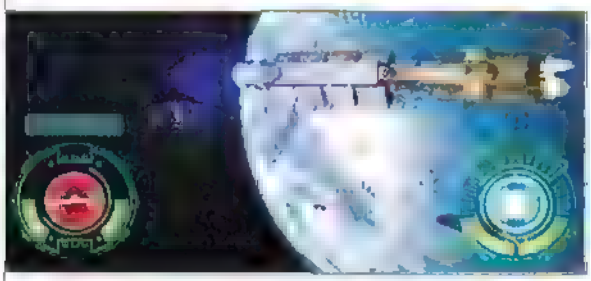

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The More Things Change...

I'm working on the Internet again. At Gamers.com. Yes, sir. The wild, wild west of gaming. Everything's different over here. And the speed of publishing has some weird light speed and relativity traveling effects. You start watching more TV. You stop playing strategy games and start playing 3D shooters again. You start using the word *like* ALL the time because your brain is moving too fast. Heck, things are so raw and rugged over here that if you want to *italicize* a word or phrase, you have to do it like this: italics. I mean, really.

Sometimes I get lazy (typing those extra seven characters is hard!!) and just use all caps or triple exclamation or question or even slash marks to make my point. And, like, if you want to start a new paragraph, you have to...

<p>

...start it like this. That's gross, Becky. And and and and and and. Like I said, it's raw and rugged and you better be careful or you might go insane and then everyone would think that games make people insane when it really would have been the Internet.

You start using the word *like* ALL the time because your brain is moving too fast.

But it's fun, too. Change is good. And because Gamers.com isn't just about PC games (we're about GameCube, Xbox, PS2, and GameBoy Advance too), I've had a good excuse to play all the new games on every platform and compare them to each other. This has proved quite interesting and question-provoking. Have we passed the point where game design moves forward in leaps and bounds? And when will musical scores play a more prominent role in game design?

If the Xbox and GameCube and PlayStation 2 all look great, and I in five years they won't look great compared to those always-improving PC graphics, what the heck are games going to look like in five years? What kind of gaming experience can wireless entertainment create? When will someone create a western that's a game, or vice versa?

I'm excited because Gamers.com will allow all of us to explore these questions that much faster. Check it out—you won't believe the kinds of discussions gamers are having about gaming right now.

George Jones
Gamers.com

George Jones was the editor-in-chief of CGW until Jeff Green beat him out of the job during a vicious game of Candyland. Email him at george_jones@ziffdavis.com, and let him know how you like our new Website!

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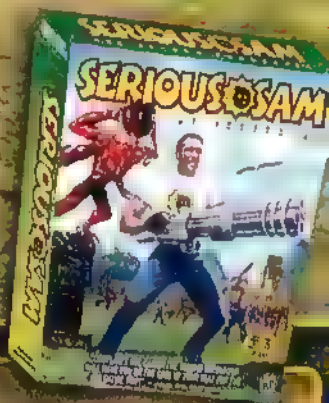

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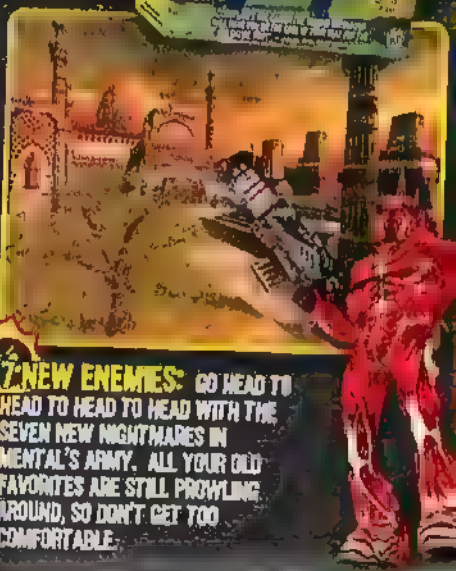

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Letters

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LETTER OF THE MONTH

This Month's Bad Idea

First of all, I want to say that I did not panic, I did not freak, and change is not that scary (Editorial; December 2001). Don't take that to heart, Jeff Green. If you have lost your December issue, a nice change—not great, but nice. If you really want to be better than PC Gamer, you have to take out the big guns. But in this case, you guys have no big guns, so you have to be cheap. Porn!!!!!!!! Yes, porn, and NO, I am not a pervert. But half of the people who read PC magazines are. Look at it this way: They will buy your magazine ($$$$), try out your demo discs, and then play with themselves. If you're anything like me, you'll take the risk.

Big Fat Ass

We'd like to agree with you, BFA, but our mommies read this magazine. So we'd better just say that that's a really bad idea and that you should be ashamed of yourself.

Gaming and September 11

I just read Charles Ardai's article about how the WTC incidents are affecting gaming. Apparently the developers are going back into their games and *removing* all references to the Twin Towers. I really don't get it. If the reason for their removal from software is a matter of geographical accuracy, then fine. But I have a feeling the issue has more to do with a perceived "sensitivity." Apparently we Americans get so emotional upon seeing these towers that we break down. Are we that fragile? In my mind, the terrorists are scoring victory after victory here. They've got us acting like gibbering idiots in our hurry to overreact. I can see Bin Laden now giggling as he says, "Hey look, we're even changing how they make their games!" If I had my way, we'd put those towers back in every piece of software, just as a gesture of defiance.

Mark Lahren
Bismarck, North Dakota

Will Work for Games

My father says I play video games too much, and if I don't stop, then that's what I'm going to do all my life—sit on my ass and play video games all day instead of becoming a doctor like everyone else in my family. Is there any job that involves playing games other than being a tester or reviewer?

Przemek Piotrowski

Jobs are overrated, Przemek. Just sit on your ass and play video games all day. And tell your dad to bite us.

Separate Scores for Multiplayer?

I have been reading your magazine for more than a year now, and I respect all of your reviews and purposely stay away from games you rank "Abysmal." (I read those reviews to get a laugh at crappy games.) But recently I have realized that you are missing a crucial element of games: the multiplayer.

Almost all games are made greater or lesser by their multiplayer mode. The single-player campaign almost never gives a hint as to what the multiplayer is like. I think it should be rated entirely separately from the single-player. Take last month's review of *Red Faction*. You gave it three stars, but you never said a word about the multiplayer.

I, and most likely a great deal of people don't give a flying f*** about the single-player campaign. There is no challenge or satisfaction in beating the snot out of a bot, and I look forward to many upcoming MMO games (my mouth waters at the thought of *PlanetSide*). I play people online who have bought games and never even tried the single player. In fact, I bought *Half-Life* and I didn't start the single-player campaign until two years after I bought it. Multiplayer and single-player are two completely different forms of gameplay—why rate them as one?

Owen Kirby

We agree with you that multiplayer and single-player gaming are two completely different experiences, and we always treat them as such. When it comes to a game's score, though, we grade it as a total package and always consider all elements before reaching our conclusions. Though sometimes it's tempting to divide scores in two for single-player and multiplayer.

"I can see Bin Laden giggle, 'We're changing how they make games!' "

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COLLECT

Trainz allows you to view your collected locomotives and rolling stock in 3D. An integrated mouse rollover system and history button allows you to display context sensitive information about the components and the heritage of your model.

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CONTROL

Choose from the engineer's view and use the 3D realistic in-cab controls with 360° vision, or 'train-spotter' view and use the virtual DCC controller. With Trainz you can climb into the cab of any of your locomotives, start them up, and ride the rails.

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It seems like all the people who read your mag absolutely hate it.

CJ

I love your magazine. It is literally the only literature I read.

Bryan (aka Jerk)

I would be very interested in hearing Mr. O'Neal's justification for referring to his own son as a "little bastard." One can only assume that he is then the bigger bastard.

Jim

Lighten up on *Max Payne*'s writing. You make it sound like it causes physical pain, whereas it's really just a minor nuisance.

Sam Newhouse

If you start picking on Canadian teens, you're going down, and I mean DOWN.

Frankie Angai

we ultimately feel that it would be confusing, and a bit of a cop-out on our part. One game, one score.

Deep *X-Com* Lovin'

I recently purchased *X-Com UFO Defense* from a bargain bin. I had heard good things about it and noticed that it now resides in your ultimate gaming paradise, the Hall of Fame. For 10 bucks, I thought I was getting a pretty good deal. But as I started to play, I found that this was no good game—this was GREAT! I spent four hours in my first sitting, starting bases, shooting down UFOs, developing new technologies, and in general KICKING ALIEN BUTT. In the next days, I couldn't stop. Sure, the graphics were dated, but I could get past that. The idea behind the game was excellent, the gameplay was fun, and the mix of elements was perfect. Why hasn't anybody else used this idea for another game?! I mean, if anyone just took the idea of *X-Com* and gave it new graphics, it would be an instant success! Is this the best game ever? In my humble opinion, YES!

MonkeybiscuitOO7

The bargain bin is your friend, kids. Learn it, love it, live it.

FPS on Xbox: Sux

I just watched a teenage kid trying to play *Halo* on the Xbox in the local mall. He could hardly control his aim, firing wildly around the target, after 10 minutes, he gave up. The Xbox may look good, but it'll never make it as an FPS platform. So much for the death of PC games.

P.S. Scooter's reviews are well done, but how do you pronounce his name?

Brian "JacMac" McMahon

His last name is pronounced "ter." First name: "Scoo."

Really, Guys, We Were Kidding

In your Forgotten Classics column (December 2001), you mention the game *Alley Cats*. I had never heard of this game before, and I was wondering if it is available for sale or as shareware. Do you know of a Website?

Mike Aldrich

Is there a downloadable copy of *Alley Cats: The Strip Bowling Game for Fast Lane Players* somewhere on the Net? If you can find time, will you please send any information you have on the game, especially the publisher or developer.

Kirk Sturdevant

Alley Cats: It looks funny. Who made it and where can I find it?

C. Matthews

That game *Alley Cats* looks really cool. Where can I find a copy?

GMaGnEt119

I would like to know if the Forgotten Classic you wrote about (*Alley Cats*) is still up and running anywhere. If so, where? I am assuming it is not, as you didn't give a URL and it's six years old, but I thought I might try anyhow.

John Becker

Okay, this is a QuickTime-based strip bowling game. You don't want to play it. Trust us. Our advice? If you really want to see naked girls, look for them on the Internet like everyone else.

Sid, Have We Got the Girl for You!

I am a young, impressionable, single girl in need of some games. Since I can't get any freebies here in Jamaica, apart from the few you give away on your monthly CD, I am begging you guys to hook me up with some sources.

Let me be specific. Are the following game guys married: John Carmack? Chris Sawyer? Sid Meier? If they have girlfriends, no problem. I can eliminate that hurdle.

Oh, and while you're hooking me up, you might just as well start sending me a FREE subscription to *CGW*.

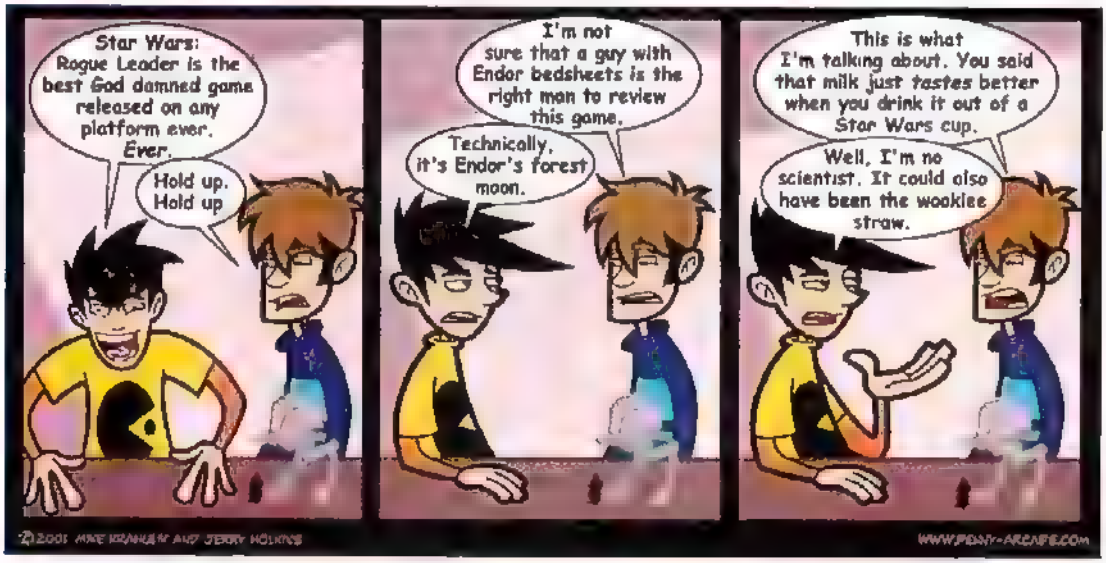
Thanks for being my favorite PC magazine. I will love you guys to death if you fulfill any or (hopefully) all of my wishes.

flaclare23

For the Record

The Nations (January 2002) is published by JoWood Productions, not Micro ds.

Penny Arcade BY MIKE KRAHULIK AND JERRY HOLKINS



RATING PENDING
RP
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Visit www.esrb.org or call 1-800-771-3772 for more info.

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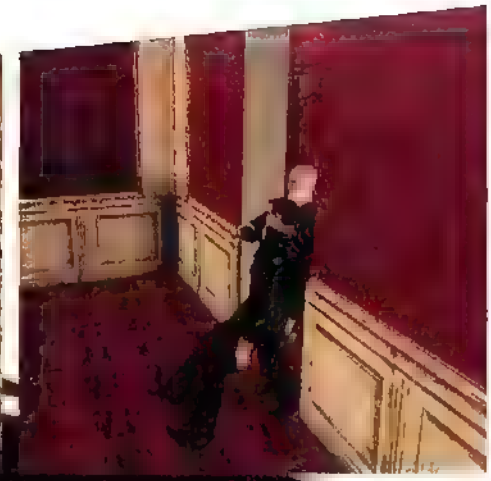
INTERACTIVE
GAMES WITH CHARACTER



Death is his business.
And business is good.

Enter the mind of a genetically-engineered assassin-for-hire, whose deadly efficiency is now needed more than ever. Lured back into a global ring of deception by a twisted Russian crime boss, he must kill not only to make a living, but to continue living. This time it's not just business. It's personal.

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- Operate in a non-linear world, where the outcome of your actions and proficiency as a hitman are measured on a balance between stealth and aggression.
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- Acquire and carry weapons and tools from mission to mission through an enhanced inventory and save-game system.

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THE GRITTY REALITY OF WAR

IS IN YOUR SIGHTS

0600 Parachute behind enemy lines, take out radar

0800 Command squad in beachhead assault

1000 Fly Cobra attack helicopter to [illegible] enemy positions

1300 Drive civilian vehicle through checkpoint

1500 Pilot and command a platoon of M1A1 tanks to take enemy stronghold

1800 Go covert with sniper rifle to assassinate enemy commander

Go to war in the most realistic combat experience ever, engaging in single-player and squad-based, non-linear campaigns.

Operate over 30 authentic military and civilian vehicles, plus aircraft in immense 3-D environments totaling 100 square km.

Create and share missions with the built-in Mission Editor and wage war online in multiplayer action via LAN or Internet.

"...so gripping, it could be a contender for Game of the Year."

4.5 / 5

COMPUTER [illegible]

MATURE M

Blood Violence

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COMPUTER GAMES MAGAZINE

"Buy now, play often."
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Lord Blackthorn is back. And this time, he's not alone. Accompanied by over 30 of the most diabolical monsters ever to come out of Todd McFarlane's twisted mind, he's on a quest to turn medieval Britannia into evil's playground. Enter this realm at your own peril, and craft, collect, and trade over 30 new items in the Internet's most immersive world, Ultima Online. Take heed, Lord Blackthorn and his minions lurk close by, leaving you with only two choices. Stand in harm's way. Or help pave its path. UO.com AOL Keyword: Ultima Online.
Comic Book and Action Figure Free Inside Retail Game Box.*
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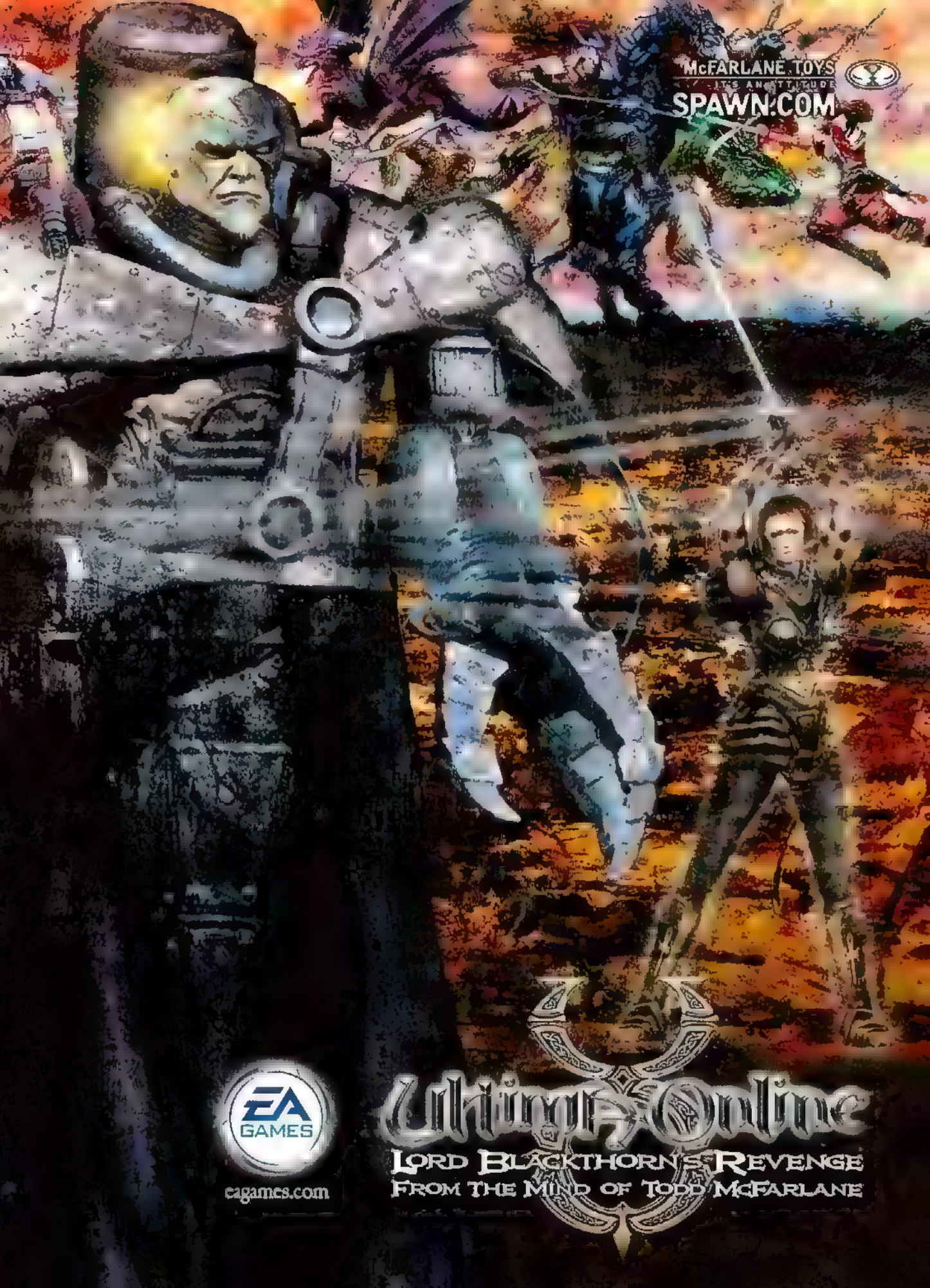
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SPAWN.COM
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eagames.com
Ultima Online
LORD BLACKTHORN'S REVENGE
FROM THE MIND OF TODD McFARLANE

Loading...

The hottest shots of the best new games Edited by Tom Price

COUNTER-STRIKE: CONDITION ZERO

A lot has changed since *Condition Zero* graced our July 2001 cover. With a new developer (Gearbox) came a complete overhaul of all the new models, maps, and weapons. What hasn't changed is the dedication to bringing a compelling single-player experience to one of the most popular multiplayer shooters of all time. We'll know if they succeeded when *Counter-Strike: Condition Zero* hits stores this spring.

The skins are familiar, but the camouflage has changed for snow, desert, and woodland, among others.

ZOO TYCOON

Nowadays, anyone can slap the word "tycoon" on a game title and it'll sell a pile. But there are few games that really capture the standard of fun and accessibility set by the inimitable *Roller Coaster Tycoon* series. Microsoft's *Zoo Tycoon* is one of the few games that comes close, offering a simple yet fun-for-the-whole-family style of gameplay that should make it a big hit. Check out the review on page 98.

Put lions in with the antelopes and you'll get predictable results. No bloody *When Animals Attack* footage here though—this is an E-rated game.
Bears on the loose will have a negative effect on ticket sales. They're probably only looking for a pic-a-nic basket.

SOLDIER OF FORTUNE II: DOUBLE HELIX

If you crave realism in your shooters, but not quite the level of simulation that *Operation Flashpoint* or *Ghost Recon* offers, then the real-world weaponry and locales of *Soldier of Fortune II: Double Helix* could be right up your alley. Once again, you'll play as special operative John Mullins, globe-trotting to exotic foreign lands and killing Kalashnikov-wielding kooks. All we know is the *Quake III*-powered engine being cooked up by the guys at Raven sure looks sweet.

SoF II features more outdoor environments, and elements like plants and trees are more clearly rendered than before.

Test their ability.

Now you can design the course of your dreams or their nightmares. Make your golfers happy by building a course with well-placed hazards that look hard, but play easy. Or drive them crazy with impossible challenges like giant pyramids and microscopic fairways. In fact, every aspect of a world-class golf resort – from airstrips for your jet-set clients to swimming pools for your suntan artists – is up to you. Build your course in the sunny desert, lush tropics, scenic

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Test their vocabulary.

woodlands or on historic Scottish links. Then, enhance your club's reputation by hosting tournaments, offering memberships and selling home sites to the rich and famous. Because from ground-breaking to par-breaking, the ultimate golf resort empire is in your hands.

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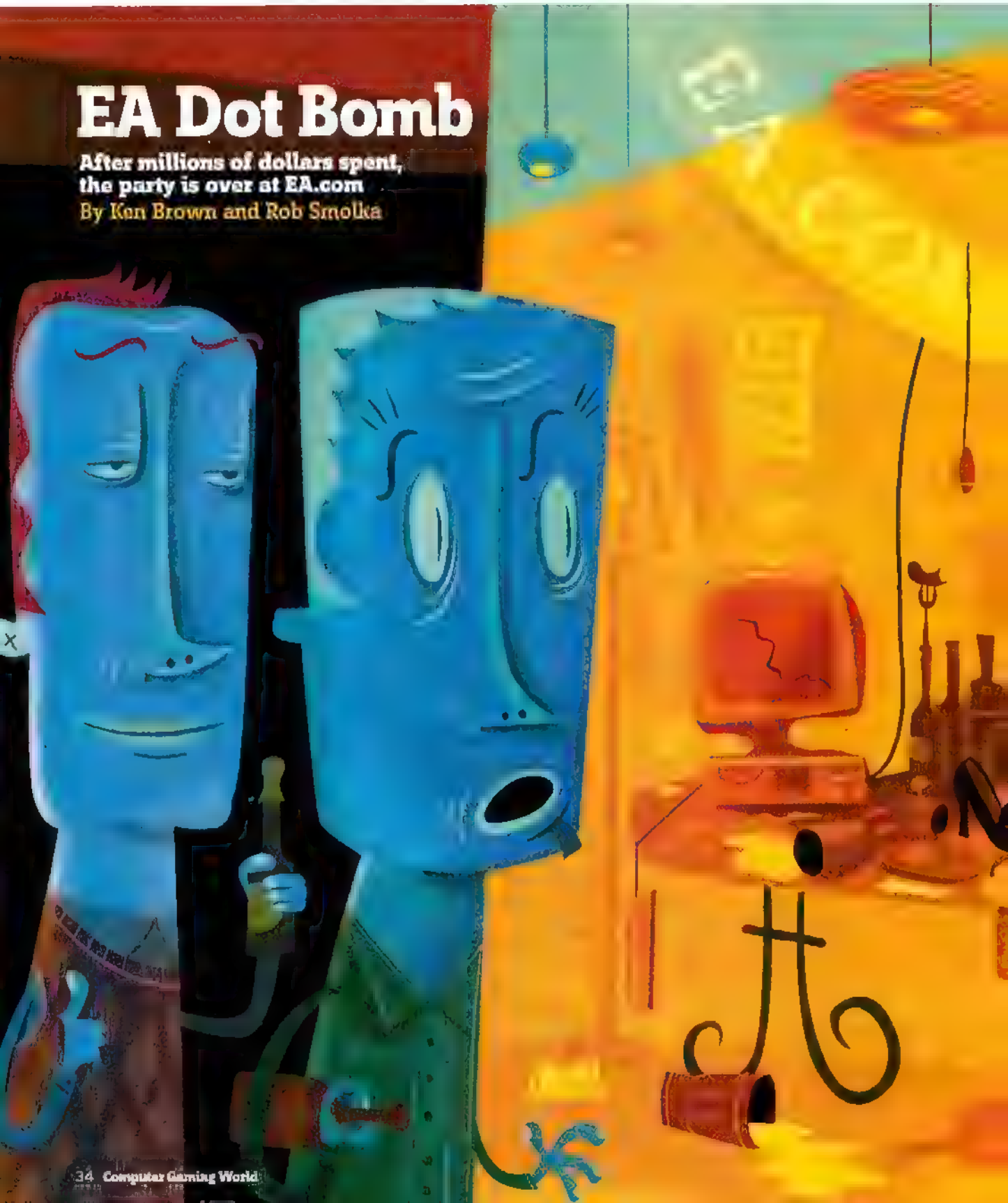
Read Me

A smorgasbord of news, opinion, and random stuff Edited by Ken Brown



EA Dot Bomb

After millions of dollars spent, the party is over at EA.com

By Ken Brown and Rob Smolka

INSIDE

SERIOUS SAM
Head into the jungle with a menagerie of freaks. **PAGE 37**

BLAM! OWWIE!
Freedom Force looks to deliver a superhero knockout punch. **PAGE 38**

COMIC GUY
Scott McCloud talks theory and practice in "Discovering Games." **PAGE 40**

NEVERWINTER
BioWare splits with Interplay, but says the game is still on. **PAGE 41**

Progress on EA's major online games for next year—*Earth and Beyond* and *The Sims Online*—is unaffected.

Electronic Arts might be the biggest game publishers in the world, but they're evidently not the smartest. After arriving late to the dot-com party, they may be the last company in America to realize the boom is over. The California-based publisher recently laid off 250 employees (approximately 40 percent of the staff) to cut costs so that EA's online business could become profitable by 2003. The company also said it would discontinue its Platinum subscription service and cancel many of the games that had been planned for it, including *Air Warrior III*, *Triple Play Baseball*, and *Tiger Woods PGA Tour Web Golf*.

For those who have followed Electronic Arts' aggressive attempts to build a dominant gaming portal, it is clear that the latest moves reflect more than "lower than expected" revenue. In the three years that EA has been working on its portal, a combination of hubris, missteps, and delays have resulted in heavy financial losses for the division and layoffs totaling more than 400 employees in 2001. This is despite the fact that EA has some of the best gaming brands in the business, including the EA Sports franchise, *Command & Conquer*, and *The Sims*.

What went wrong? In theory, EA's strategy made sense. The company envisioned a massive games portal where millions of people could play dozens, perhaps hundreds, of free games. The centerpiece of the strategy was a fee-based service for EA's hottest games. Platinum subscribers could play all the premier titles for a monthly rate of $9.99. The list of Platinum service games was impressive, including *Majestic*, *Ultima Online: Third Dawn*, *Motor City Online*, *The Sims Online*, and *Earth and Beyond*. It also included—and, in fact, was the only way to participate in—games like *Multiplayer Battletech 3025* and *Air Warrior III*, the latest version of the long-running online series.

Following its cancellation of some of those games, EA said the shakeup was analogous to what goes on in network television. Spokesperson Jeff Brown said, "From time to time, EA company evaluates its offerings to determine which ones are popular and which aren't. Less popular games are replaced with new offerings we think will attract a wider audience. The process is essentially the same as the one used by television networks to determine their lineup of new shows. It was determined that some of the games within the Platinum service were not meeting expectations."

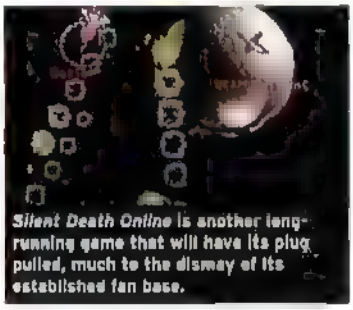
The realm of giant robot bashing belongs to Microsoft now that EA has cancelled *Multiplayer Battletech: 3025*.

But behind the corporate spin, it was clear that Electronic Arts had made some expensive gambles that didn't pay off. During the dot-com fever of 1999,

"It was determined that some of the games within the Platinum service were not meeting expectations."

Say goodbye to *Air Warrior III*, the latest, and last, descendant of one of online gaming's oldest members.

While continuing to lose money, EA.com lacked the killer game it needed to attract a wider audience.



Silent Death Online is another long-running game that will have its plug pulled, much to the dismay of its established fan base.

when companies with little more than a business plan and a Website were achieving lofty stock valuations, EA paid America Online $81 million to be the exclusive operator of AOL's game channel. That same year, EA acquired Kesmai, the online gaming pioneer responsible for creating the groundbreaking combat flight sim *Air Warrior* and *Multiplayer Battletech*.

Last year, EA acquired another gaming portal, Pogo.com (formerly the Total Entertainment Network) for $42 million. Meanwhile, EA invested heavily in expensive infrastructure to meet the site's expected bandwidth needs. And, of course, it spent millions more on developing games just for EA.com, including titles like *Majestic*, *The Sims Online*, and *Earth and Beyond*. All told, EA invested about $350 million to develop its Web-based business.

Unfortunately, *Majestic* turned out to be a major disappointment for EA, attracting only 15,000 subscriptions, about one-fourth the number of subscriptions the company had hoped for. To make matters worse, development of highly anticipated games like *The Sims Online* and *Earth and Beyond* is taking longer than expected. The result is that EA.com has lacked the killer game it needed to attract a wider audience, but it's been hemorrhaging money.

Origin cofounder Richard Garriott, who helped develop *Ultima Online* (still one of EA.com's best moneymakers), says EA's approach in building the site was tragically flawed. "They adopted a mass market strategy and spent millions to acquire online players who were probably only interested in playing for free. They thought they could convert the 25 million players on AOL Games Channel and Pogo into subscribers of EA.com's Platinum service. The only problem was, compelling apps never materialized; they spent a fortune on an exotic Internet backbone and overhead, and the whole thing was too costly to sustain. It really makes you question the whole foundation of their strategy," Garriott says.

In fact, gaming portals have never been successful. The only subscription-based games that have scored with consumers have been PC games like *Ultima Online*, *EverQuest*, *Dark Age of Camelot*, and NCSoft's *Lineage: The Blood Pledge*, which has experienced explosive growth in Korea.

So where is EA.com going? *Ultima Online* and *Motor City* are not affected, subscriptions for each remain $9.99 a month. *The Sims Online* and *Earth and Beyond* are still scheduled for release in 2002, though no pricing information is available. EA's Jeff Brown says that there are no plans to bring back any of the cancelled games: "While there is a base of fans for these titles, it is just not enough to sustain the games."

For now, EA.com will continue to enter (and its 25 million registered members (who, incidentally, eat up 2.6 billion—with a B—minutes per month) with a few remaining EA-licensed games and its Pogo division, which offers simple trivia, board, and card type games. And it's clear that members will continue to use EA.com—as long as it's free.

THE GOOD, THE

THE GOOD
YOUNG PC TURKS

Okay, so all the big boys are either firing people, making lousy games, or making console games. Who needs 'em? A bunch of promising "younger" developers are making PC games with the kind of enthusiasm and creativity the old guys have forgotten about. Here's a tip o' the hat to Strategy First, Fishtank, and Codemasters—three of the new breed, keeping it real.

THE BAD
MAGIC: THE GATHERING ONLINE

This is one of those "good bads"—meaning it's bad because its potential to be good scares us. The *CGW* goons have long ignored the seductive siren song of trading-card games like *Magic*, but when WOTC demo'ed the online PC version for us, we were sucked in immediately. A potentially brutal time and money sink.

THE UGLY
BIOWARE-INTERPLAY DIVORCE

BioWare made it official in December, severing its ties with Interplay and ending one of the most successful developer-publisher alliances ever. BioWare revived *D&D* as a great PC gaming franchise and helped establish Interplay as the premier RPG house in the late '90s. What'll happen to *Neverwinter Nights* now? (Find out on page 41.)

HANDS ON

Get Even More Serious

***Serious Sam* heads to the jungle for more frantic action with a menagerie of freaks** By Thierry Nguyen

Now that Croatia has achieved a modicum of stability, some of its soldiers have gotten back to their former avocation: making games that let you shoot fictional dimwits rather than real ones. Stepping back into the fray, developer Croteam is polishing up *Serious Sam: The Second Encounter* for release around the time you read this. *TSE* is not as much a revolutionary leap forward (like, say, *Unreal* to *Unreal II*) as it is more of the same game with new weapons and enemies (*Doom* to *Doom II*). That's why it's ready to pop out less than a year after we all drooled over the frantic action of *Serious Sam*.

Croteam promised not to have any Egyptian levels, and they make good on that promise. *TSE* starts off by dropping you right into the jungle, providing massive greenery to go along with the action. The three major area types are South American, Babylonian, and traditional Medieval.

Squeeze My Guns

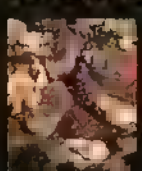
There are also three new weapons to play with, in homage to *Doom* and even *The Evil Dead*, one of the first weapons you can grab is the chainsaw, which makes for a great offense against the innumerable hordes of pesky frog critters. The second new weapon is a sniper rifle, useful for picking off harpies from a distance so you're not stuck spraying them harmlessly with your other pea shooters. Just don't expect to use it on anything bigger than a werebull or an arachnoid. Last, the flamethrower is there to lay down generous jets of napalm on any of the baddies around—they've finally quieted the screaming of those beheaded kamikazes and replaced it with the sound of roasting flesh.

The new enemies are trickier to find and more bizarre than ever. Where else would you encounter a giant, chainsaw-wielding pumpkinhead, described as "a perfect example of Mental Rolling in his Infinite Badness"?

All in all, it looks like *TSE* will be the quick action fix for gamers seeking greener pastures this winter.

Replace the awful screams of beheaded kamikazes with the soothing sounds of roasting flesh.

GET A LIFE Life-the Ultimate Real-Time Game



[illegible] Fudge
Mix 4 cups sugar and 1 can evaporated milk in a saucepan. Boil 10 minutes but *don't stir*. Remove from heat. Stir in two sticks of butter, then 28 marshmallows cut into quarters, and then 26 oz. of chocolate. Add 1 tsp. vanilla extract and chopped walnuts. Refrigerate in greased 9-by-13 pan. Eat until sick.

24
One of the best shows on right now. The constant twists and turns keep us glued to our tubes, and we always end up babbling about the previous night's episode over Wednesday morning donuts. Is Nina really the dirty agent? What's gonna happen to the daughter? Can I cut off your index finger?

The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier & Clay
An interesting and well-researched novel about the Depression-era comic book world, but also a surprisingly moving coming-of-age story. Michael Chabon's Pulitzer Prize winner is a must-read for gamers, especially in the current political climate.

Cowboy Bebop
Wow! Finally a Japanese anime that doesn't involve tentacles, robots, or metaphysics. Fusing good visual design, smart scripting, and jazzy music, this Cartoon Network anime simply oozes style. Call it a futuristic Western noir with postmodern sensibilities. Now available on DVD.

HANDS ON

BLAM! CRU-U-UNCH! Owwie!

Freedom Force looks to deliver a superhero knockout punch **By George Jones**

When I first saw *Freedom Force* for the February 2001 cover story, I was dazzled at what the Irrational Games developers were undertaking. *These guys get comics,* I thought. Who else but a true-blue comics fan would pay homage in the form of a strategy game to one of the most famous eras in the history of superheroes?

And in addition to getting comics Irrational's developers (creators of *System Shock 2*) get game design. After spending some time playing *Freedom Force,* I discovered that the game provides a more fluid and engaging experience than I expected.

The play mechanics combine *X-Com* with traditional real-time strategy gaming. You direct your heroes by clicking on where you want them to move or attack, and they execute your orders. Click on top of a building, and they'll jump or fly there if they can. Even cooler, click on a car or street light, and they'll pick it up. Click on a bad guy when your hero is holding up a car, and your hero will chuck the car at the villain!

The gameplay fuses *X-Com* mechanics with traditional real-time strategy gaming.

Although each hero and villain has stats, on the surface the game plays out like a comic book. If you want to get serious, you can use the game's robust statistical engine to create your own characters for both single player and multiplayer action. Irrational hopes this versatility will appeal to both hardcore and casual gamers, regardless of their interest in comic books.

But will gamers who aren't comic book fans really appreciate *Freedom Force?* When the Minute Man is first created, he heroically notes that he doesn't know how he got his powers, but he does know that he must use them for good. Anyone with more than a passing familiarity with superheroes will chuckle. But will anyone else in the new, post-ironic world get it?

We'll find out this coming spring. I hope that Irrational's gamble works—PC gaming hasn't seen a rich, character-driven game in ages.

REALITY CHECK

Reality Check compares various media ratings with those of GameRankings.com, which averages the ratings of all published reviews for a given title.

GAME	CGW	PC Gamer	CGM	Gamespot	IGN	GameRankings.com
Aliens vs. Predator 2	A	A-	*	A-	B+	B+
Civilization III	A+	A	*	A	A	A
C&C: Yuri's Revenge	B+	A	*	A-	A-	A-
Empire Earth	B+	A-	*	B	*	B+
Matt Hoffman's BMX Racing	C	B-	*	B	B-	B
Pool of Radiance	F	C	D	C	C	C+
The Weakest Link	D-	B-	*	D	D-	C

* NO RATING AVAILABLE AT PRESS TIME

A New Wizardry for a New Generation

- Explore a vast 3D world filled with action, magic, and adventure.
- Choose a custom personality for each character and hear them speak over 100 lines of dialogue.
- Battle over 300 types of monsters in some of the most intense combat ever seen in a RPG.
- Advanced creature A.I. brings a new level of realism to RPGs.

*Wizardry® is a registered trademark.

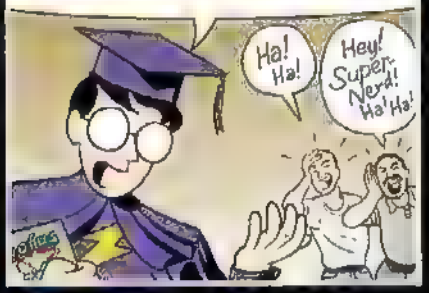
DISCOVERING GAMES

#2

THEORY AND PRACTICE

by Scott McCloud

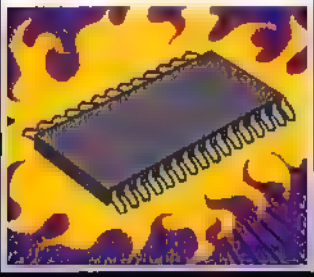
If you've ever had trouble getting the outside world to take ***games*** seriously, you can imagine what it's like to be a ***"comic book scholar"!***



Gaming, like comics, is supposed to ***stay in its place*** and function as nothing but simple, innocuous ***entertainment,*** and attempts to treat games as ***something more*** can easily ***backfire*** as ***pretentious*** or ***silly.***

Truth is, there are plenty of games ***and*** comics that ***don't*** deserve much serious attention --

-- but as the ***technology*** and ***popular acceptance*** of gaming continues to ***advance*** --



-- some more attention to ***computer game theory*** might help steer the industry into more ***productive territory.***

Boardgame veteran and wireless game designer ***Greg Costikyan*** defined games as:

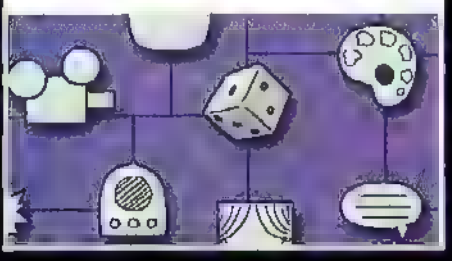
Now definitions are ***tricky things.*** I get into frequent battles over my 8-year-old definition of ***comics.***

But dry, clinical-sounding definitions like Greg's -- as ***geeky*** and ***academic*** as they might sound -- can serve some important ***functions.***

One: They don't mention any of the ***stylistic elements*** we associate with games -- helping to challenge ***preconceived notions*** of what any game ***"must"*** or ***"must not"*** include.

Two: They help to suggest ***unexplored territory.***

And Three: They can help build a ***foundation*** for understanding where gaming stands in the landscape of ***other*** forms of ***art, entertainment, communication,*** and ***expression.***



Best of all, if games finally get the respect they deserve, gamers will finally have a good all-purpose ***excuse...***

Hey, are you goofing off in there?!

Why ***no!*** I'm, uh... ***Researching!***

UPDATE

Neverwinter Nights

BioWare splits with Interplay but says the game is still on track By Mark Asher

"We're creating a really strong story for both single-player and multi-player."

It's the RPG we're all waiting for—*Neverwinter Nights*, the third-edition *Dungeons & Dragons* computer game from BioWare. *Neverwinter Nights* will let players create their own modules and act as dungeon masters in a multiplayer setting. Following news in late November that BioWare had terminated its contract with Interplay, we asked BioWare joint-CEOs Greg Zeschuk and Ray Muzyka how things are going with the game.

Both stated emphatically that *Neverwinter Nights* is on track and will be unaffected by the switch to an as-yet unannounced publisher. "We're still aiming for this winter—work has been progressing very well and we're quite happy with how things are turning out," says Zeschuk. "*Neverwinter Nights* is playing more and more like a real game now," he added.

Says Muzyka, "We're currently finishing up and bug-testing the final game features. We're also finishing modules, play-testing the story line, and stress-testing the overall game."

Although the game will have a strong multiplayer component, single-player fans aren't going to be disappointed, says Muzyka. "We're creating a really strong story for the game. This story can be experienced in either single player or multiplayer and players can go back and forth between single-player and multiplayer sessions through chapters of the game."

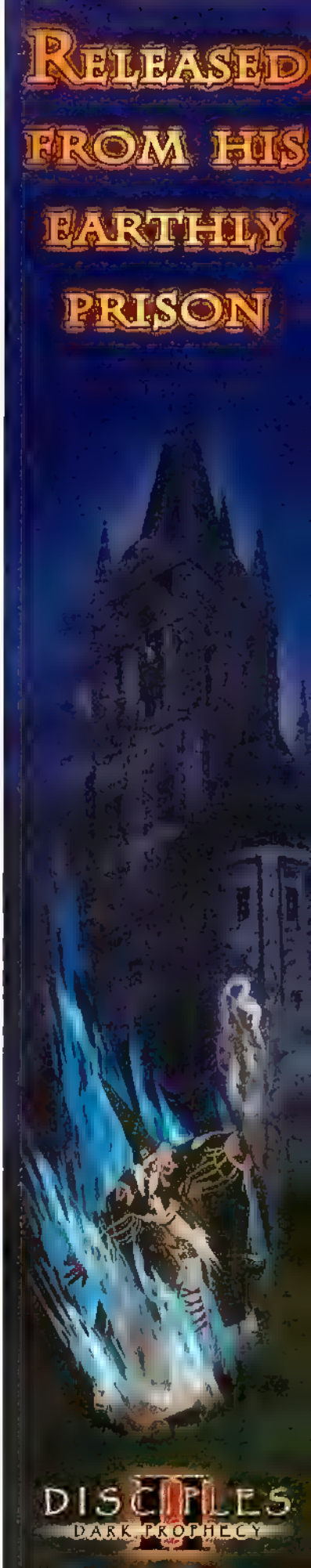
Zombies vs. Chickens

The game recently passed a big milestone—its first stress test. "A significant portion of BioWare was required for this test since we wanted to run two simultaneous 32-person servers," Zeschuk said. "Our goal is to start increasing the number of players per server to determine a feasible maximum limit."

It wasn't all work during the stress test, though. "When you put a bunch of developers on a server, the first thing they try to do is mess things up. People started running some custom scripts and using debug tools to change their appearance," Zeschuk said.

"The highlight of the session was our quality assurance department changing themselves into chickens while others removed their heads. While this didn't quite rise to the level of chickens running around with their heads cut off, we did find it quite entertaining. In our final assessment, the servers were wonderfully stable and, more importantly, a fun time was had by all."

We'll bring you more on this eagerly awaited RPG—and tell you who will publish it—as soon as we find out more.

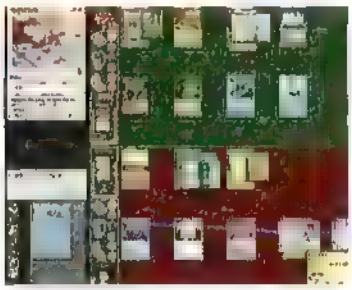


HANDS ON

Magic Online

They call it *The Gathering*; we call it *The Obsessively Collecting* here at *CGW* By Robert Coffey

Few of us had actually played *Magic*. We simultaneously mocked and feared it. Mocked it for its non-electronicness and the inherent dweebiness of cards that "cast speks." Feared it because deep down in our hearts, we knew we were exactly the sort of dweebs to get pulled deep inside it. Wizards of the Coast left us a playable beta of the online game, and we can now honestly say we no longer fear *Magic*. Instead, we're terrified. The incredible time (and money) sink that is *Magic* is coming to the online world, and you, our faithful reader, might as well surrender.

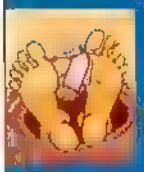


The reason we're shaking in our embarrassing green felt elvish booties is this: *Magic* accomplishes what every worthwhile strategy game strives for. It's easy to learn, hard to master, cunningly balanced, and possessed of incredible depth. And by putting the whole thing online where any virtual card-flipping macontent can find others of their misbegotten ilk, WOTC has made the game accessible to pretty much the whole dang world. No more looking for a local game shop—a couple of clicks and you're online casting Volcanic Hammer against some guy called Uldar.

Gameplay is exactly the same as the real-life version, with the added bonus of the computer tracking all those mind-boggling rules for you. The game should retail for about $15 and won't require monthly access fees. Instead, *Magic Online* will follow the real-world business model by charging you only for new decks and booster packs. With millions of players online and 600 new cards released annually in nifty little 15-card booster packs—you do the math.

We can honestly say we no longer fear *Magic*. Instead, we're terrified.

As mesmerized as we are with the online beta, there are still some things that need work. Wizards of the Coast may know a lot about creating a collectible card game, but they've got a way to go when it comes to interface design. We're also hoping they create a dedicated newbie zone: Nothing will scare away a timid fledgling player faster than getting pounded to death in five turns by a more experienced player. Look for *Magic, The Gathering Online* in the first half of 2002.



PERSPECTIVE POST-MORTEM

By Bruce Geryk

Heroes III

Sequels tend to get computer game critics up in arms. "Where's the originality?" they cry. "Where's the innovation?" Anything that isn't completely new runs the risk of incurring some lecture about derivative game design. It's harmless, but it also gets annoying. Especially when it's wrong.

Heroes of Might and Magic III is a perfect example. When *Heroes III* came out and looked an awful lot like *Heroes II*, a lot of people said it was just the old game with new graphics. I liked the old graphics (and music) so there would have been no reason for me to switch away from one of the best strategy games of all time. Except for a couple of things.

Heroes III changed the entire equation by doing two simple things: adding more building and unit types (and upgrades), and making the combat maps bigger while giving flyers fixed movement allowances like everyone else. Since getting your castle to produce top-level creatures takes significantly longer in *Heroes III*, you have a long period in which you're fighting with midlevel monsters. This has become a significant part of the game. Castle upgrade decisions are much more important and are more dependent on the map and your general position in the game. Likewise, flying units can have many uses in *Heroes III* and are no longer just long-range parachutists. So *Heroes III* has the same game mechanics as *Heroes II* but plays very differently, making it a much better game.

Heroes II had its simplicity...

...but a few minor tweaks made *Heroes III* a much deeper game. Will the same hold true for *Heroes IV*?

It's hard to design a sequel using a different design philosophy and have it really be a sequel. *Heroes of Might and Magic IV* will have several notable changes: heroes will be able to fight in combat, multiple heroes will be able to be part of the same army, and armies won't even need heroes to move. Those are three huge changes that promise to drastically change how the game plays. In addition, there will be a nonmagic castle type, which finally adds the "might" part of *Might and Magic*. Even so, *Heroes IV* will have the same general framework, with the same basic game system as its predecessors. The framework may be the same, but it's the little changes that make all the difference.

COMING NEXT MONTH

Unreal II

Next month CGW brings you the first hands-on preview of this spectacular [illegible] shooter from [illegible]. Yes, we've actually played it and we can attest to the fact that it really looks this good (in fact, we played the level from which this shot was taken). Find out about the new weapons (did someone say leeches?), the story elements, and the debut of some of the new alien races.

Tune in next month, shooter fans, and get ready to be blown away.

Go Gatchaman!

***Battle of the Planets* comes to DVD, and soon to PC** By Jason Babler

If the voice of Casey Kasem and five kids dressed up like birds battling enemies in costumes with flare pants doesn't ring a bell then you won't understand this nostalgia trip. But if you're already having flashbacks of rushing home after school in the '70s, grabbing a glass of Tang, and turning on the mammoth Zenith console in the family room, then you probably remember *Battle of the Planets*. Produced by the same team that did *Speed Racer* and *Robotech*, it was arguably the first mainstream anime series in America, and now it's on DVD.

The two DVD set features four of the original episodes with some violent scenes edited, the corresponding original, uncut Gatchaman episodes with subtitles; and two bonus G-Force episodes.

But the big news is that *BOTP* is also being made into a game. Developer Headfirst Productions says it will have a cel animated look like *Jet Grind Radio* or *Dragon's Lair*. Each character will have their own weapon and vehicle, as they did in the show. Multiplayer is also planned, so get ready to wax Zoltar online once and for all.

Pick up the two DVDs and spend a few hours reliving your childhood (as if we didn't do that enough already). Science Ninja Team Gatchaman, transmute!

(Editors' note: We haven't the slightest idea what Babler's babbling about, either, but he insisted we run this, so humor him. That's what we did.)

FIRST LOOK

I'm Going In Again

***IGI 2* aims for redemption By Ken Brown**

If you've never played *IGI*, one in an almost-uninterrupted series of mediocre shooters from Eidos, count yourself lucky. The lack of an in-mission save resulted in more than one smashed mouse, while brain-dead AI and lack of a multiplayer mode consigned *IGI* to a brief stay on most hard drives.

But developer Innerloop Studios is making an earnest attempt to redeem itself with better AI, team-based multiplayer support, an engaging storyline, and an actual in-mission save. The game also has a new publisher: Codemasters, the flashy upstarts responsible for one of the best tactical sims of 2001 *Operation Flashpoint*. With all of this going for it, *IGI 2* might be a contender.

Players will again assume the role of British special forces agent David Jones, a James Bond-style former SAS officer now working for an American black-ops group. Jones will undertake top secret military operations by infiltrating airbases, harbors, and secret installations throughout a campaign set in China, Russia, and Libya. The game will feature a wide range of modern weapon types and a dynamic weapon accuracy system in which the player's aim is affected by running, walking, crouching, or lying flat.

The early version of the game that we saw didn't exactly give *Ghost Recon* a run for its money, but we did see enemies react to their environment, work as a team, and utilize authentic combat tactics. The graphics so far look good, and a variety of environments and missions suggested that *IGI 2* will be a shooter you probably won't turn your back on. *IGI 2* should be sneaking up our perimeter this summer.

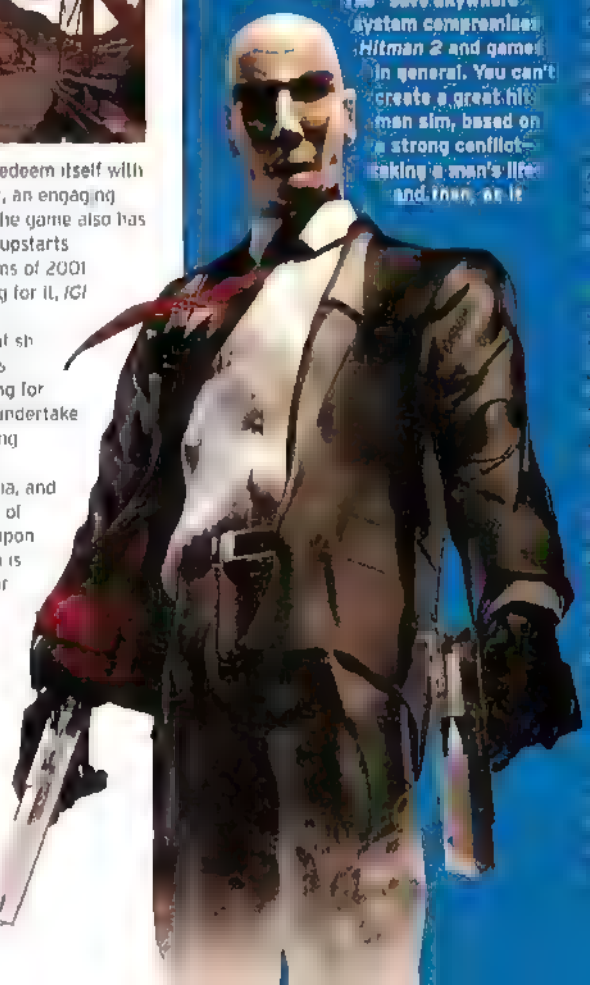
PERSPECTIVE: *CGW* DEATHMATCH

By Arcadian Del Sol

Do Game Saves Undermine Tension?

Gamers have argued about save games for years, but this month we bring the issue into sharper focus with a rare glimpse into the debate within one game company. Io Interactive's *Hitman* had a very limited save function, for which the game was roundly criticized. (*CGW* gave the game a two-star rating.) When Io began work on the sequel, some members of the team wanted a more forgiving save system. Two very vocal camps emerged to argue their positions, and they continue to disagree. Lead animator Janos Flösser wants fewer save games; managing director Jens Peter Kurup thinks unlimited saves are essential. Gentlemen, take your best shot.

Janos Flösser: Last Christmas we sent out a card with the bald man from *Hitman* as Santa and a quote: "There is no save game in real life." The "save anywhere" system compromises *Hitman 2* and games in general. You can't create a great hit man sim, based on a strong conflict—taking a man's life—and then, as it gets tough to play, cheat on it.



Jens Peter Kurup: As a gamer I have to disagree. Real life is boring. That's why I'm only a hit man in games. As game designers, our primary goal is to entertain as many people as well as possible with as few breaks as we can. If "cheating" helps this to happen, it's fine by me. Who am I to judge if the player has more fun if he can save?

Hardcore gamers would want to run the game entirely without a save game. The mortal ones might like a limited amount of saves, and the ones that really suck might need it everywhere. But they should have fun too.

JF: The whole idea of *Hitman* was to create suspense and adrenaline. Where will that happen with a save game?

JPK: Nothing ruins suspense and adrenaline like having to repeat a task again and again. I enjoy experimenting in a game, but if I can't save, it's too risky to try things out. You often end up solving a mission the way the designers imagined it. That just sucks.

JF: If the game were too difficult to play, it would be fun to introduce some difficulty levels, helping the gamer to start—maybe adding info and help as the game develops.

JPK: Since *Hitman* can be played different ways, I would feel bad explaining how to solve it. Let people think and experiment. We should encourage players to play with a limited number of saves, but we shouldn't force it upon them. After all, some levels might be very easy for some and hard for others.

JF: The lack of a save game forces the gamer to think, right? Or improve his skills. That's gameplay as I see it. After all, the genre is thinking-shooter. Why on earth should anyone develop such an advanced AI if the player is just eager to go on a rampage? If that is the case, we could get rid of the AI and concentrate on the physics. That wasn't the idea!

JPK: Rampage is fun. Yes, sniping and strangulation are more rewarding in the end, but every now and then, the ol' shotgun makes me happy. And with a shotgun, you really need a save game.

NEWS FEED

New Gaming Event to Focus on Innovation

Leading lights in the gaming biz will converge in late February for a new event called the D.I.C.E. Summit. The purpose of the summit is to bring industry leaders together "to encourage discussion and cultivate innovation," say its organizers. The Academy of Interactive Arts and Sciences will host the event in Las Vegas, in conjunction with the Fifth Annual Interactive Achievement Awards.

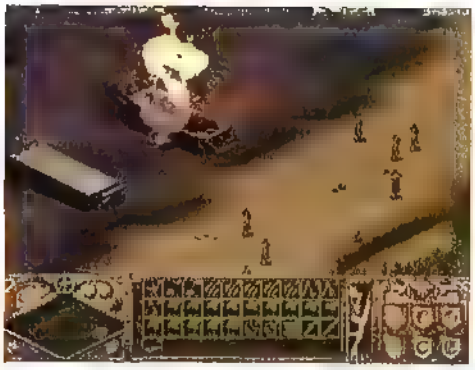
Several leading game designers have agreed to speak on various topics, including Bruce Shelley, Cliff Bleszinski, Louis Castle, Sid Meier, Richard Garriott, and Will Wright. The event will be sponsored by Sony, Nintendo, Electronic Arts, Infogrames, and Ziff Davis Media (publishers of *CGW*).

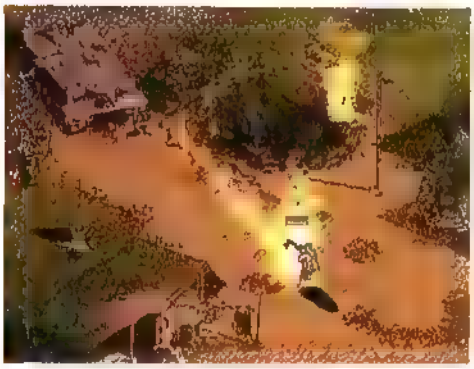
For more information, visit www.dicesummit.com.

3DO Signs Curt Schilling to High Heat Baseball Team

3DO has signed Arizona Diamondbacks ace pitcher Curt Schilling to an endorsement deal to promote the latest edition in their award-winning baseball game series, *High Heat Major League Baseball 2003*. The game is scheduled to ship for PC, PlayStation 2, and Game Boy Advance this spring.

While *High Heat Baseball 2003* will feature better graphics, smoother animations, new game modes, and more realistic ballpark sounds, the design team's biggest focus is ensuring the game won't ship with the bugs that have plagued all the previous releases in the franchise. The game will feature the voice work of Dave O'Brien of the Florida Marlins, color man Chuck Valenches of the Pittsburgh Pirates, and stadium announcer Roy Steele of the Oakland Athletics.





FIRST LOOK

WarCommander

Command a band of brothers in this WWII RTS By John Houlihan

It's not just the former Allies who glory in their WWII conquest—now the vanquished are getting in on the act. Germany's CDV is working on a tactical RTS that lets you command your own band of brothers, the 2nd U.S. Ranger battalion.

WarCommander is essentially a cross between the strategic action of CDV's *Sudden Strike* and the stealthy tactics of *Commandos*. Players control an infantry company of 40 men who accumulate skills and experience throughout a campaign that stretches from that heroic assault on the cliffs of Pointe du Hoc to the attack on Hitler's bunker in the ruins of the Reichstag. Day-night missions, deformable 3D terrain, and variable weather are set to play their part in some compelling WWII encounters as you lead your company to unlock Fortress Europe. Get ready to hit the beaches in March 2002.

PREVIEW

Prisoner of War

Codemasters tries to capture the drama of *The Great Escape* By John Houlihan

Watching Steve McQueen trying to gun that bike over the barbed wire in *The Great Escape*, you can't help wondering if a subtler approach might have brought home the bacon. Witness James Coburn paddling his way down the Rhine to freedom. Less spectacular than motorbike escapades, yes, but way more effective.

But whether by stealth or speed, it's every officer's duty to escape—and that's exactly the dilemma facing you in *Prisoner of War*, Codemasters' unconventional new game of stealth and trickery set during WWII. You play Captain Lewis Stone, a USAAF pilot who's shot down on a secret surveillance mission over Stalag Luft III. Rumors that the Nazis are using the POW camp as a blind to develop a devastating new V2 weapon prove all too true, and your new orders from London state that now you must not only escape, you must also sabotage the Nazi weapons program at all costs.

You'll have only three weapons available: your wits, your dexterity, and rocks. You can climb fences, dart under vehicles, and sneak through shadows to avoid being spotted, but sometimes you'll need a rock to knock out searchlights or distract the guards. Your goal is to assemble bits of information or contraband to facilitate your escape.

Of course, you're not exactly at leisure to pursue your sneaky plans. You'll need to keep an eye on the game clock to know when to muster for roll call. Miss it, and you'd better be either hidden where the dogs can't find you or well beyond the fence.

With open-ended gameplay that mixes planning, opportunity, and stealth interspersed with sudden bursts of action, *Prisoner of War* is an intriguing departure that looks set to capture all the suspense of those real-life WWII escape stories. Watch for this one to go over the wire sometime in the spring.

Screw McDonald's!

How a bunch of punks won a total of $100,000 playing *Age of Empires II* all day By William O'Neal

If anyone points out that your "excessive" gaming is pointless and that it's time to stop wasting your life, just tell them about 18-year-old Byung Geon Kang from South Korea. Kang walked away with a $50,000 check from Bill Gates after stomping the best players in the world in Microsoft's 16-nation *Age of Empires II: The Conquerors* tournament.

The tournament started out jovially with Canadian Sunny Sihota (one of the tournament's more colorful contestants) pointing out that—other than *Age*—his favorite hobbies are "long walks on the beach and candlelight dinners." Another colorful character was the lone American in the group, Jerry Terry (who made it to the final four and won $7,500), a former decathlete who now tends bar when he's not playing *Age*.

Kang debates whether he should go out and buy one Corvette, three Daewoos, or five Kias.

If anything, the tournament showed us that gamers are as diverse as the nations they represented.

EXTENDED PLAY: HOMEBREW

By T. Byrl Baker

Indie Standouts

For the past four years, the Independent Games Festival has showcased some of the best shareware and freeware games on the planet. Entrants last year included games like *Shattered Galaxy*, *SabreWing*, and *Takeda* (reviewed on page 88), and this year the contestants are just as strong. Check out the official Website, www.igf.com, to find links to all of this year's submissions.

Kung Fu Chess

Kung Fu Chess turns the old-school standard on its head by transforming it into a real-time strategy game. Players move simultaneously and can advance as many pieces as they like as quickly as they are able. The catch is that each piece has to recharge for a fixed amount of time before it can move again, which adds an incredible amount of depth to the game's tactical possibilities. Captures are not immediate: You can dodge that rook sliding clear across the board, provided your threatened piece isn't recharging. The opposing king must be captured like any other piece to end the game. *Kung Fu Chess* black belts can try the truly insane four-player variant. www.kungfuchess.com

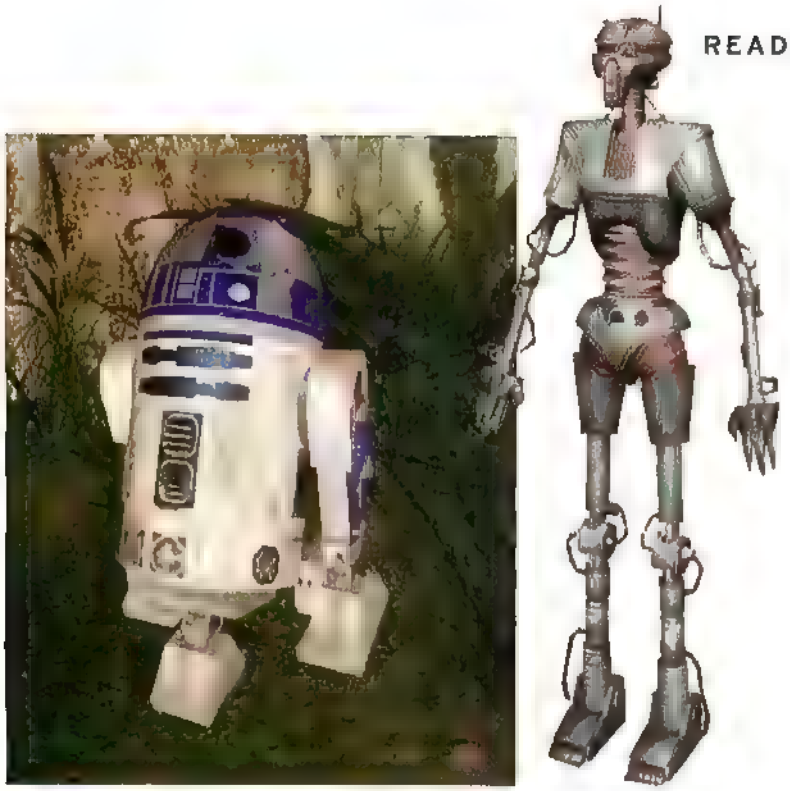
Gorotest 2

4D Rulers' new multiplayer demo shows off the game's impressive graphic enhancements. The levels are now drenched in color, dotted with power-ups so bright they almost hurt your eyes. Rocket blasts kick up particles upon impact, dynamic lighting has been implemented, and every special effect looks like it's been carefully polished.

The levels have been further improved, with tighter layouts that are perfectly suited for *Gore*'s over-the-top multiplayer frag fests. And there are four character classes and four game modes to explore before the next demo appears. It's well worth the 70MB download. www.4drulers.com/gore/index2.html

RealArcade

If you're addicted to all those little online games like *Bejeweled*, think of RealArcade as a pharmacy that's open 24 hours a day. The software corrals online games from a number of developers, getting you right to your fix with minimal clicks. The only drawback is that it doesn't track enough freeware, but we were so busy playing stuff like *Collapse* in the Web Games category that we scarcely had time to notice. www.realarcade.com



UPDATE

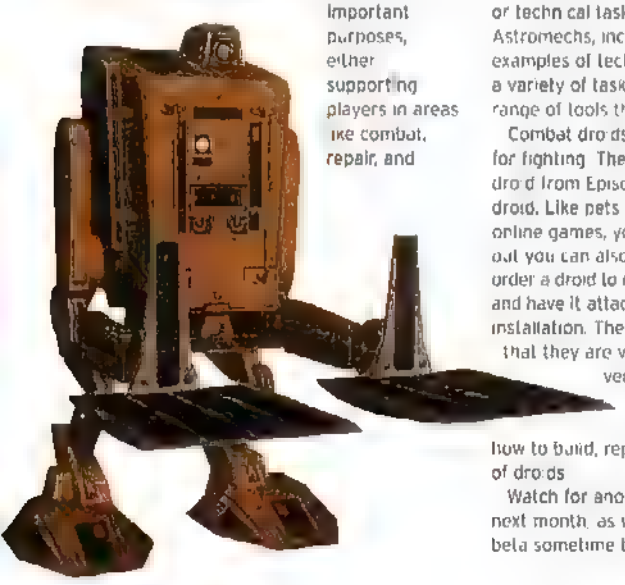
George's Used Droid Lot

Best deals in the galaxy on top-quality droids for all your maintenance and combat needs

By Ken Brown

It could be decades before robots will fix your vehicle, walk your pet, shoot your nosy neighbors, or take your girlfriend back to her parents. But in a virtual world, it won't be long at all. In the upcoming online game *Star Wars Galaxies*, you can have droids do just about any of those things, plus whip out blasters in case a Rodian starts poking his snout into your business.

The designers of *Star Wars Galaxies* are working on making these buckets of bolts an indispensable part of the game. They will serve important purposes, either supporting players in areas like combat, repair, and medical assistance, or doing things that players don't want to do, like haggling with Jawas.



All *Star Wars* droids fall into three basic categories: service, technical, and combat. What's cool is that players will be able to buy, build, and modify almost all of them.

Service droids work as aides, servants, or translators. Protocol droids, like C-3PO, fall into this category. Service droids generally perform one task really well, but they aren't very versatile.

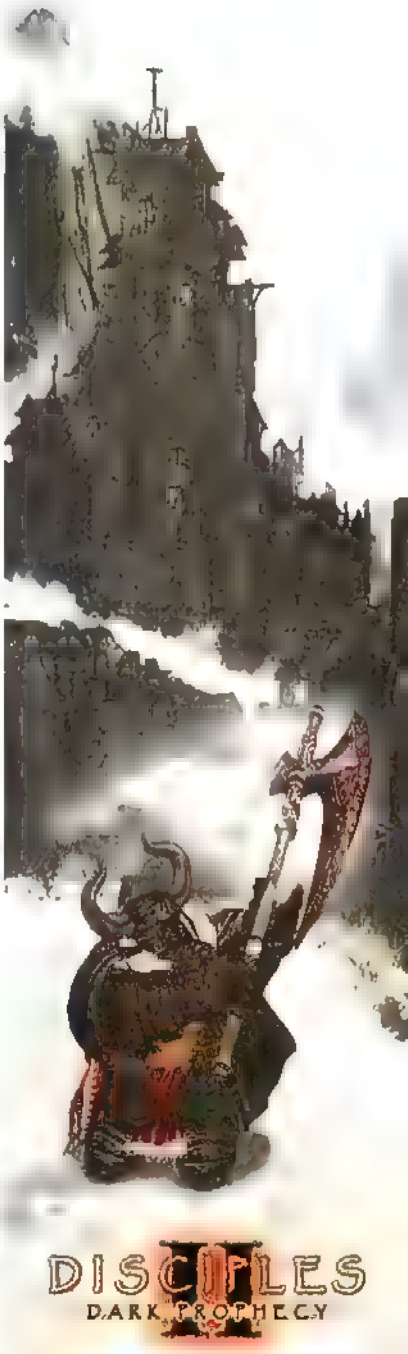
Technical droids perform various mechanical or technical tasks, such as repairing vehicles. Astromechs, including R2-D2, and pit droids are examples of technical droids. They can perform a variety of tasks and are armed with a wider range of tools than service droids.

Combat droids are programmed and equipped for fighting. These might include the destroyer droid from Episode I and IG-88, an assassin droid. Like pets in other massively multiplayer online games, you can order them to attack, but you can also use them defensively. You can order a droid to guard an installation, for example, and have it attack anyone who threatens the installation. The downside of combat droids is that they are very expensive and not very versatile.

Players who gain skills in Droid Engineering can learn how to build, repair, and modify a wider range of droids.

Watch for another *Star Wars Galaxies* update next month, as we approach the game's open beta sometime this summer.

AND DESTRUCTION TO OTHERS



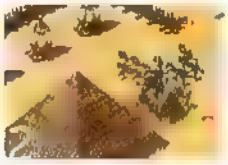
DISCIPLES II
DARK PROPHECY

RANKINGS

CGW Top 20

A *Dark Age* spread over the land—and from Midgard to Minnesota, there arose a great "Whoop!"

It's not perfect, but *Dark Age of Camelot* is the best MMORPG yet.



Gamers found *Yuri's Revenge* a must-have add-on to *Red Alert 2*.

The Sims' campaign for world domination is far from over.

Rank	Last Month	Game	Rating
1		**Dark Age of Camelot** ($39, Vivendi Universal)	★★★★½
2	–	**Command & Conquer: Red Alert 2–Yuri's Revenge** ($28, Electronic Arts)	★★★★☆
3		**The Sims** ($40, Electronic Arts)	★★★★★
4	–	**Sid Meier's Civilization III** ($49, Infogrames)	★★★★★
5	5	**Roller Coaster Tycoon** ($21, Infogrames)	★★★★½
6	7	**Diablo 2 Expansion: Lord of Destruction** ($32, Vivendi Universal)	★★★★½
7	3	**Operation Flashpoint** ($40, Codemasters)	★★★★½
8	4	**The Sims House Party Expansion Pack** ($29, Electronic Arts)	★★★★½
9		**The Sims Livin' Large Expansion Pack** ($28, Electronic Arts)	★★★★½
10		**Asheron's Call: Dark Majesty** ($20, Microsoft)	
11		**SimCity 3000 Unlimited** ($26, Electronic Arts)	★★★½☆
12		**Microsoft Flight Simulator 2002 Pro** ($70, Microsoft)	
13	12	**Sim Theme Park** ($19, Electronic Arts)	★★★★☆
14	–	**Microsoft Zoo Tycoon** ($26, Microsoft)	★★★½☆
15	8	**Stronghold** ($38, GodGames)	★★★★½
16		**Command & Conquer: Red Alert 2** ($35, Electronic Arts)	★★★★½
17	8	**Max Payne** ($46, GodGames)	★★★★½
18	6	**Madden NFL 2002** ($38, Electronic Arts)	★★★½☆
19	10	**Diablo II** ($34, Vivendi Universal)	★★★★★
20		**Pool of Radiance: Ruins of Myth Drannor** ($48, Ubi Soft)	★☆☆☆☆

OCTOBER RETAIL SALES RESULTS BY NPD INTELECT

NOTABLE QUOTE

[illegible]

5, 10, 15 YEARS AGO IN *CGW*

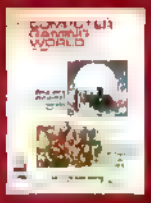
Five Years Ago, Feb. 1997

Our "1001 Cheats & Tips" feature was useful, but it also offered rare insight into game designers' souls. Witness the ass fixation of the *Shattered Steel* team, with cheats like STOOL, DINGLEBERRY, and the poetic BUMSAUCE. Naturally, the *Harvester* team reveled in bloodlust with cheats like CHARLES MANSON and SON OF SAM. But the one that puzzled us was the money cheat for Will Wright's *SimCity 2000*: PORNTIPSGUZZARDO. Huh?

Ten Years Ago, Feb. 1992

Like a gangly teenager, computer gaming was lurching toward the future. The Industry News column that month was about virtual reality and that VR poster child, *Dactyl Nightmare*. Played in a cage with a Tron-style helmet, *Dactyl Nightmare* cost gamers $4.50 for three minutes. "VR is here and it's great!" crowed our column. Ten years later, VR is gone and that's fine.

Fifteen Years Ago, Feb. 1987



One of our riveting features this month was a transcription from an online forum on RPG and adventure games. It's a wonder anyone took the participants seriously, with names like Frabbitz, The Duffer, The Silicon Knight, Wyvern, Dragon-Rider, Tor, and (our favorite) Dungeon Ken. You'll never see dorky names like that in *CGW* again, no sir. From now on it's Arcadian del Sol, Dessiock, Lord British, Scooter, and (no one's favorite) Jeff Green. The more things change, the more they stay the same...

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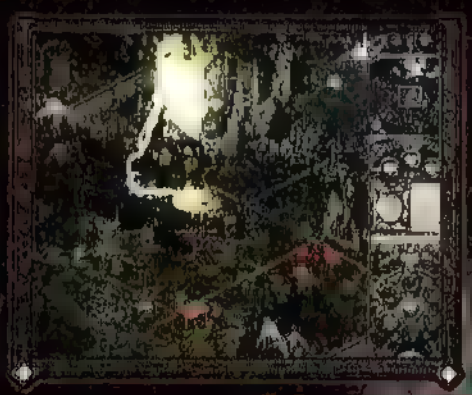

The Prophecy unfolds, January 2002.

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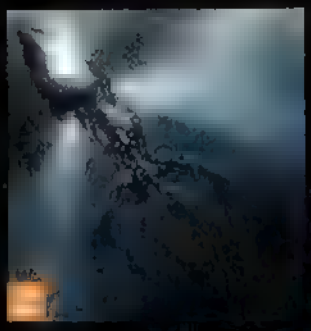
PIPELINE

Our latest guesses about when those games are finally shipping



Divining software release dates is like trying to predict which appendage Keifer Sutherland will chop off next in *24*. These dates represent the best available info we had at press time. If you're a publisher, send your updates to cgwletters@ziffdavis.com.

JEDI KNIGHT II We've recently learned that Luke Skywalker will appear in the game; Kyle Katarn will be able to operate some in-place weapons (such as turrets); and there will be a team-based multiplayer mode in addition to capture the flag. Also, the Jedi Mind Trick will have varying effects, ranging from making you invisible to distracting enemies into a distant area.

DEUS EX 2 The game is coming together, now that all of its various components—the engine, artwork, maps—have been integrated. All the core technology is in place, and the focus is now on scripting missions, designing enemy AI, writing the dialogue, and fine-tuning.

COMBAT MISSION 2: BARBAROSSA TO BERLIN The sequel to the 2000 Wargame of the Year will feature a new interface, new terrain and weather, vehicle morale, fortifications, optional ammo reduction, and more. We understand that most of the new features are complete, so the team should begin testing soon.

COMMAND & CONQUER: RENEGADE The C&C shooter should now be in multiplayer beta, so gamers are running around dropping ION cannon beacons and shooting down NOD and GDI units alike.

SOVEREIGN Last month we incorrectly reported that Sovereign had been cancelled. We regret the error.

Age of Mythology	Microsoft	Spring 2002
Age of Wonders II: The Wizard's Throne	Take Two	Spring 2002
Arx Fatalis	Fishtank Interactive	Spring 2002
Asheron's Call 2	Microsoft	Winter 2002
Black & White: Creature Isles	EA	December 2001
Bonestorm	Okama	Summer 2002
Combat Mission 2: Barbaressa to Berlin	Big Time Software	Spring 2002
Command & Conquer: Renegade	EA/Westwood	February 2002
Commander Jill	Stardock	Spring 2002
Connect	JoWood	Spring 2002
Counter-Strike: Condition Zero	Sierra	Spring 2002
Deus Ex 2	Eidos	Summer 2002
Disciples II: Dark Prophecy	Strategy First	January 2002
Doom 3	id Software	Eventually
Dragon Empires	Codemasters	Spring 2002
Dragon's Lair 3D	Blue Byte	On hold
Duke Nukem Forever	3D Realms	January 2002
Dungeon Siege	Microsoft	January 2002
Earth and Beyond	Westwood	Spring 2002
Elder Scrolls: Morrowind	Bethesda	Summer 2002
Far West	JoWood	Spring 2002
Freedom Force	Crave	December 2001
Galactic Civilizations	Stardock	Fall 2002

IL-2 Sturmovik	Fredom Games Inc.	February 2002
Global Operations	Crave	Spring 2002
Halo	Microsoft	Spring 2002
Heroes of Might and Magic IV	3DO	March 2002
Hidden & Dangerous 2	Take Two	Spring 2002
Hitman 2: Silent Assassin	Eidos	Spring 2002
Hotel Tycoon	JoWood	Spring 2002
Imperium Galactica 3: Genesis	CDV	Spring 2002
Impossible Creatures	Microsoft	Summer 2002
Industry Tycoon 2	JoWood	Spring 2002
Legends of Loch Ness	Dreamcatcher	Spring 2002
Lineage 2	Destination Games	Spring 2003
Lock On: Modern Air Combat	Ubi Soft	February 2002
Master of Orion III	Infogrames	Spring 2002
Medal of Honor Allied Assault	EA	February 2002
Medieval: Total War	Activision	Summer 2002
Midgard	Funcom	Summer 2002
Might and Magic IX: Writ of Fate	3DO	Spring 2002
Natural Resistance	JoWood	Spring 2002
Neocron	CDV	Spring 2002
Neverwinter Nights	Interplay	Summer 2002
Nexagon: The Fifth	Strategy First	Spring 2002
Outcast II: The Lost Paradise	No publisher yet	Winter 2002

PlanetSide	Sony Online Entertainment	Summer 2002
Project IGI 2	Codemasters	Summer 2002
Quake IV	Activision	Someday
Reality Deathmatch	JoWood	Spring 2002
Republic: The Revolution	Eidos	Summer 2002
Serious Sam: The Second Encounter	Take Two	Spring 2002
Shadowbane	Ubi Soft	Spring 2002
Sims Online	EA	Summer 2002
Soldier of Fortune II: Double Helix	Activision	Spring 2002
Sovereign	Sony Online Entertainment	Someday
Spring Break	Eidos	Spring 2002
Star Wars: Galaxies	LucasArts	Spring 2003
Star Wars Jedi Outcast: Jedi Knight II	LucasArts	Spring 2002
Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic	LucasArts	Fall 2002
Tabula Rasa	Destination Games	Summer 2003
Team Fortress 2	Sierra	Spring 2003
Thief III	Eidos	Summer 2002
Unreal II	Infogrames	Spring 2002
WarCraft III	Blizzard	Spring 2002
Warlords IV	Ubi Soft	Summer 2002
Warlords Battlecry II	Ubi Soft	March 2002
World of WarCraft	Blizzard	Eventually

NEW UPDATE

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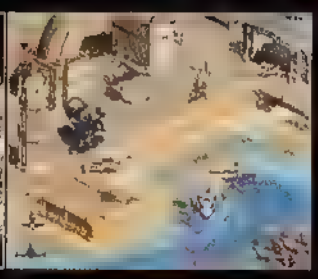

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VIOLENCE

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PC CD ROM

LUCAS Arts

Minor track details like oil stains, chipped paint, and even moss growing in the cracks can be seen with the new texture compression engine.

All the Winston Cup teams, drivers, and sponsors are represented here, except of course for beer makers.

Driving lessons feature custom voice-overs from Darrell Waltrip and pop-up text balloons with crucial information.

NASCAR RACIN

It's bigger, better, and most important, louder. Toss in some mullets and tallboys, and

G 2002 SEASON

ou'll have the most realistic NASCAR simulation of all time By Tom Price

It's hard to improve upon perfection. Doing so implies that the original was less than perfect. Yet each year, Papyrus comes out with an iteration of their highly successful *NASCAR Racing* series that makes both hardcore simulation fans and everyday joes stand up and take notice.

After the huge leap forward that 2001's definitive *NASCAR Racing 4* signified for the series, a lot of fans might be wondering what could possibly be done, outside of fixing bugs and polishing graphics, to make the fifth installment worth the upgrade. Well let me tell you, the specific details of what's been improved may not add up to a huge list, but as soon as Tom Faiane, production manager at Papyrus, fired up a beta build at the *CGW* offices, the subtle changes were instantly noticeable.

All the hallmarks of the *NASCAR Racing* series are still there. Plus there's a bit more.

For one, the sound engine has been significantly upgraded over last year's model. The beefy roar of 600 hp engines has always been impressive, but with the addition of more samples, improved cross fading, and another separate audio channel, the engine sounds now have subtle layers, from low grumbles to high-rpm whines. The immersion factor shoots up when your engine sounds like a real engine.

Graphically, the game looks a lot better, thanks to an improved texture compression engine. It's most noticeable on the tracks themselves, where the oil-stained asphalt looks more real than ever. The new texture compression also improves the look of the cars and contributes to better overall graphic performance.

But let me put the diehard fans at ease: Nothing about the unflinchingly realistic driving physics has been changed—they've just been refined. The car and track dimensions are still rendered down to the most infinitesimal mote. All the hallmarks of the *NASCAR Racing* series are still there. Plus there's a bit more.

For instance, they have included a few features that should provide help to inexperienced players. First, you can hit a hotkey at any time and see a color-coded best line superimposed directly on the track. And driving lessons have been added to teach newbies the ins and outs of racing basics like braking, taking the best line, and drafting. And they've also included track tours—narrated by Darrell Waltrip—that explain every turn on every track and give tips to lower your lap times. Unfortunately, these sections are noninteractive—you just watch—but the information contained within is top-notch. With new features added to the replay engine, you can make your very own instructional (or just entertaining) movies of races with your own voice-over.

To the Starting Line

Speaking of tracks, all those from *NASCAR Racing 4* (which for the first time included every track on the Winston Cup circuit) are here. There is also one fantasy track, and no, it doesn't involve loopdy-loops or jumps (although the developers did consider a figure-eight track). It's a perfect three-mile oval race with no restrictor plates. Kind of like super-Talladega for all the serious speed freaks out there. Supposedly, they're hitting 230 MPH around the Papyrus offices.

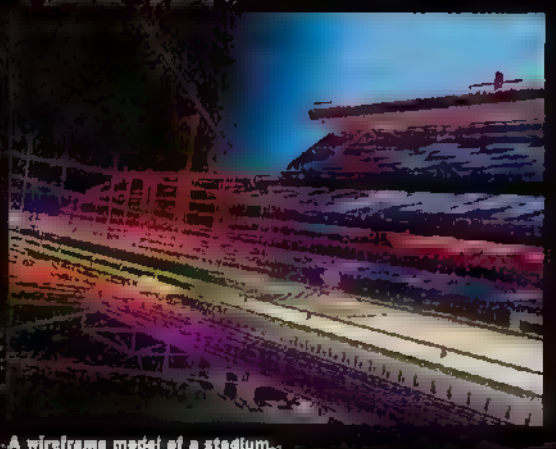
The racing sim community can be hard to please sometimes, but they should be satisfied by this new installment of the hardest of the hardcore. Gentlemen! Start your...well, you know.

GAME STATS

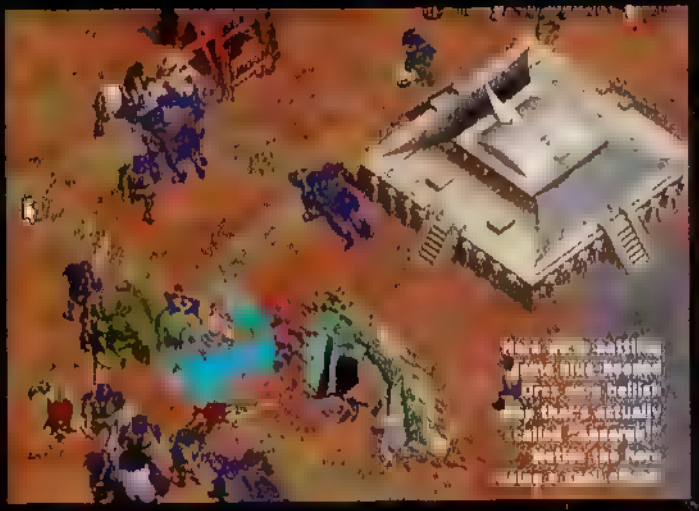
GENRE: Racing simulation PUBLISHER: Vivendi Universal DEVELOPER: Papyrus URL: www.papy.com RELEASE DATE: Q1 2002

Losing control and spinning out at 180 MPH doesn't sound like fun to me.

Graphical detail on cars is noticeably improved.



A wireframe model of a stadium...



WARLORDS

When turn-based and real-time strategy worlds collide, all kinds of magic and

BATTLECRY II

mayhem can ensue By Tom Price

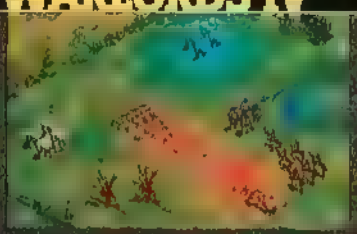
Last year's *Warlords Battlecry* was a pleasant surprise to fans of the classic *Warlords* franchise of fantasy-themed turn-based strategy games as well as to RTS fans who were looking for something that broke the mold of the standard RTS game. This year's *Warlords Battlecry II* should continue the enjoyment players felt with the first game, while giving fans of the *Warlords* universe a little more to chew on.

As in the first installment, the game centers around your hero unit. The hero unit, in addition to being the most powerful unit on your screen, is also the most versatile. Heroes not only have the power to convert resources, affect the ability of the troops they lead, and build your territory, they also sport powerful attacks and an ever-expanding spellbook. *Battlecry II* gives you more varied spells than before, all the races from the first *Battlecry*, plus three new races to choose your champion from. You'll be able to select a brutally strong Daemon hero, a Dark Dwarf hero, or a cunning Fey hero; you'll then select a specialized profession that further differentiates your hero and his or her powers. Each hero race has its own strengths and weaknesses, and they vary in their effectiveness in leading the different races.

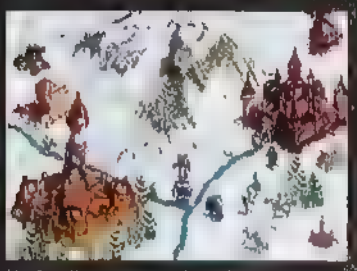
The AI of the races you command has been enhanced. Now you can give orders on which stance to take—defending, attacking, escorting, and so on—so they'll do more than just stand around. Of course, with new races, there are myriad new units like the Oakmen and the Doom Knight.

Warlords Battlecry was a really great game that didn't get the attention it deserved. Find us another RTS with such smoothly streamlined resource gathering that also throws in the RPG elements of characters and quests so effortlessly, and we'll play the crap out of it just like we did with *Battlecry*. And just like we'll do with *Battlecry II*.

WARLORDS IV



You'll have to get involved with the tactics of battle instead of sitting back with a comfortable view.



Having the *Battlecry II* engine means *Warlords IV* will look pretty and have the strategic depth of the previous games.

Looks like the Orcs of Kor are back. *Warlords IV* is rolling its way toward a 2002 release, with a few big changes. For instance, there will be tactical combat for which you'll issue movement and attack orders, instead of merely sitting back and letting the computer crunch the statistics. Heroes will also be persistent in both the campaign and individual scenarios, and magic spells will go through an experience system (the more a spell is used, the more powerful it is). Other features include a new dynamic campaign and resource-gathering model, while old standbys like the brutal AI are kept intact. Stay tuned for a more in-depth preview as the game gets closer to shipping.

Battlecry II's hero unit is the most powerful and the most versatile.

The most badass of the new races: the Daemon.

Both new and familiar characters will be appearing in *Battlecry II*.

GAME STATS

GENRE: Strategy
PUBLISHER: Ubi Soft
DEVELOPER: SSG
URL: www.ubi.com
RELEASE DATE: Q1 2002

SILK
8
STROBEL
19

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Stormin'
Norm

andy

Relive D-Day and kick the Krauts back to the Rhine with Medal of Honor Allied Assault, a game that thinks war should be fun.

BY KEN BROWN

ILLUSTRATION BY MATT HALL

THE WARRIORS ARE ALL dying off, but the war itself lives on. Consider the influence it still has on mainstream culture. In the last 10 years alone, more than 125 books have been published on World War II. In Hollywood, where war movies have become a genre unto themselves, major studios continue to churn out new WWII films, including Windtalkers, Enemy at the Gates, Pearl Harbor, and Captain Corelli's Mandolin. On television, the $120 million Band of Brothers reached more than 70 percent of HBO viewers, ranking as the second-most-watched multi-part program in HBO's history (behind The Sopranos). As the war on terrorism heated up in Afghanistan, it only increased our appetite, culminating in ABC's airing of Saving Private Ryan–inspired ted-on Veteran's Day, which captured the largest TV audience for any film in the last two years.

Clearly, we haven't forgotten America's Great Crusade. And neither have game publishers, who last year released World War II Online, Commandos 2, Deadly Dozen, and Return to Castle Wolfenstein. Of these games, Wolf will draw the inevitable comparisons to Medal of Honor since both games are shooters set in WWII and powered by Quake III. And that's about where the comparison ends. For while Wolfenstein lets players blast zombies and other creatures cooked up in Himmler's diabolical research dens, Medal of Honor is designed to be a more authentic war experience. After all, who needs fictional monsters when the 70-ton King Tiger was real?

The four men in front died instantly in a hail of machine-gun fire.

To find out how *Medal of Honor* plays, we signed up for a tour of duty and played about half of the game's levels. (We played a late beta version of the game; the final version is expected to ship in late January.) The following accounts from the game's protagonist, Lieutenant Mike Powell, relate our experiences from actual gameplay scenes. Your mileage may vary.

Silencing the Guns

My first mission was to link up with an undercover OSS agent in Algeria. The Germans had a coastal battery nearby that needed to be destroyed in preparation for Operation Torch, the Allied invasion of North Africa. My mission was to find the agent and his explosives—both of which had been captured by the Nazis—blow the battery, and escape north with a stolen vehicle.

Things didn't go well. My whole squad was taken out as we fought our way through town. I moved through the shadows to find an open door with German voices coming from it, so I snuck in for a closer look. A Nazi officer was playing cards with some soldiers in the front room. Drawing a bead with my M1, I took out two Krauts with one clean shot through the officer's head. I burst into the room and finished off the others. It was strange to see the dead officer's anguished look, while still holding a playing card in his hand.

—Lt. Mike Powell

This scene, from the third level of the game, offers a glimpse of what *Medal of Honor* is really like. Apart from the Omaha Beach level, most of the missions don't involve large numbers of troops or open-field combat. Instead, the game features more shooter-like levels, where you, as Lieutenant Mike Powell of the 1st Ranger Battalion, must make your way (often alone) through enemy installations, by either fooling guards, avoiding them, or killing them.

That doesn't mean there isn't a lot of variety in the game, though. You'll fight through several different locations in the game's 30 odd levels, from North Africa to Normandy, from decimated French villages to dark German forests. You'll use a variety of authentic weapons from both sides, including Thompson submachine guns, grenades, .50-caliber mounted machine guns, and anti-tank weapons. And you won't just be shooting at soldiers, you'll get to destroy all kinds of things, from tanks to Stuka dive-bombers. To enhance the game's sense of authenticity, the designers have made escaping a part of each mission, which means you're going to have to fight your way out to a safe location after achieving your objective.

MOH's centerpiece is the intense battle on Omaha Beach. You'll really earn your combat pay in trying to get to the sea wall to blow up the razor wire.

Where's the Blood?

Rivers of blood were lost in WWII, and yet there's not a drop anywhere in *Medal of Honor*. Why? Project leader Peter Hirschmann explains, "The driving factor behind Steven Spielberg's creation of the *Medal of Honor* series was to bring the WWII experience to as wide an audience as possible."

Reaching the widest audience possible means that the game must have a Teen rating, because big retailers like Wal-Mart and Kmart avoid carrying Mature-rated games. (Games with realistic blood require M ratings.)

That may make sense for video games, but most PC gamers will doubtless find the absence of blood disappointing. As Spielberg himself demonstrated in *Saving Private Ryan*, you can't depict realistic combat by pretending people don't bleed. Only by seeing injuries can an audience feel the true emotional impact of combat and understand what war really is.

No murders to avenge.
No helpless families to save.
No morals to uphold.
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You're the Black Knight and you've got better things to do. Like lead an infamous legion of rogue mercenaries into battle, trade weapons on the black market, even fight for the ruthless House Steiner. All while piloting the most badass 'Mechs ever. Welcome to the darker side of MechWarrior... Black Knight. Where it's good to be bad.
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BLACK KNIGHT
TEEN
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However, you should be aware that *MOH* won't feature large-scale, open-field combat. This isn't a painstakingly realistic military simulation in the vein of *Operation Flashpoint* as much as it is a shooter with an authentic WWII flavor. Those familiar with the award-winning *Medal of Honor* PlayStation game, upon which *Allied Assault* is loosely based, will feel right at home.

Bloody Omaha

Our wave of Higgins boats approached the shore in the early morning fog. As we drew near the beach, the coastal batteries opened up, sending 15-foot-high plumes of water crashing all around. We were hunched like old men. When the ramp dropped, the four men in front of me died instantly in a deafening hail of machine-gun fire. I somehow managed to get off the boat and get behind a tank obstacle; rounds slammed into it and burst into pieces.

It was sheer chaos, men yelling everywhere. "Where's the rally point, sir?" "Get off this beach!" "Keep moving soldier! You can either stay here and die in the sand, or you can get moving to that sea wall!"

I scrambled to another obstacle to move a few inches forward. There was a medic there tending to a wounded GI. All around us were soldiers, weapons, and ammo boxes. Several men surged forward and then disappeared in the blast from two direct-hit mortars. The Nazis had the beach zeroed in. I ran from obstacle to obstacle, then dove into an artillery crater for cover. Finally I made it to the sea wall, terrified and bloody.

The captain ordered me to bring up bangalores. I nearly got killed picking up a dead engineer's munitions. When the captain blew the razor wire, we raced to the foot of a giant bunker to figure out our next move. The captain ordered me to grab a Springfield lying nearby and take out the Krauts in the machine-gun nests at the top of the cliff. The scope on the Springfield let me put a round right in their foreheads.

The bunker had to be emptied, and the Thompson was just the thing, making short work of the dozen or so soldiers who tried to stop me. Finally, at the top, I cleared out the last Krauts who were raking the beach with their MG 42s. When their guns stopped and our guys could get moving, I knew old Adolf's days were numbered.

—Lt. Mike Powell

Omaha Beach is the centerpiece of *Allied Assault*. There has never been a PC game that let gamers live the harrowing experience of D-Day from a soldier's perspective. For that reason

The bunker firefight borrows heavily from *Saving Private Ryan*.

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Some of the environmental detail is superb, as in this scene on a U-boat. The crew doesn't take kindly to your efforts to blow up their ship.

The Springfield scope will save your ass, since one well-placed shot is all it takes to terminate your target.

alone, gamers worldwide will be drawn to this game to see how well it depicts the famous assault. And for the most part, I don't think they'll be disappointed.

But they should be realistic. While much has been said about how this level closely parallels the opening scene of *Saving Private Ryan*, it's not exactly the same. The number of men in the Higgins boats, the number of men on the beach, and the number of German soldiers are all fewer than they were historically. You won't see technicolor explosions with perfect particle effects, helmets with bullet holes in them lying around, and hundreds of men cowering below a sea wall. In fact, you won't even see a single drop of blood (see "Where's the Blood?" on page 60).

But given the constraints of today's PC technology, the Omaha Beach scene is a striking achievement. There are several scripted events to add drama, such as a Higgins boat exploding next to you near the beach. The sound effects, created by the award-winning *Medal of Honor* sound design team, are utterly convincing. And the difficulty of getting across the pock-marked beach without getting shot or mortared met my threshold for realism. I died at least 20 times trying to make it to the sea wall.

Snipertown

Rain fell on the half-ruined French town, which didn't do much for my mood. We'd gotten bogged down in hedgerow country, and the only way to break out was to clean out this town. But the enemy seemed to be hiding in every high window and dark crevice. Soon as you poked your head out, you'd hear a crack and—if you were lucky—a round would glance off your helmet. It was slow going.

The Springfield was a lifesaver. I used it to peer into windows and alleys where I thought a sniper could hide. But the devils were smart: They didn't poke their rifles out unless they had a shot. So you had to be patient. Moving slowly, listening, scanning the windows with my scope, I started to make some headway.

Then I got into a firefight on the street. I thought there were just a few of them, so I tried to stand my ground. Big mistake. A whole squad moved on me, pushing me into a corner. Just my luck, a massive Panther turned the corner and started bearing down on me, too. I thought I was cooked.

All of a sudden, the tank erupted in

Weapons

Medal of Honor players will be able to use 21 historically accurate handheld weapons, plus four types of German and American machine guns mounted in bunkers and on certain vehicles.

M1 GARAND
The .30-caliber M1 Garand was the standard-issue rifle for American infantry and was the first semiautomatic rifle widely used in combat. It has a definite kick, so you can't just fire away and hope to hit your target.

SPRINGFIELD '03 SNIPER
First designed in 1903, the Springfield was outdated by WWII, although some soldiers continued to use it as a sniper weapon, particularly in the Normandy campaign. This rifle has a sniper scope in the game; secondary fire brings up the scope for targeted shots.

THOMPSON SMG
The Thompson was originally conceived as a "trench broom" right after WWI. With a .45-caliber round and a high rate of fire, the Thompson succeeded admirably at clearing out enemy positions. It has quite a kick in the game, so it takes time to become proficient with it.

GERMAN MP 40 SMG
The MP 40 machine pistol had a high rate of fire and was easy to carry thanks to its folding metal stock. The MP 40 won the admiration of Allied soldiers, who often referred to it as the "Schmeisser." It doesn't have a lot of stopping power, though—you have to fire several rounds to finish the job.

a giant fireball–*ka-BOOM*. I thought it must've misfired, but then six P-47s rolled over like angels from above. Good thing I never met those flyboys–I woulda kissed 'em.

–Lt. Mike Powell

Scripted events like this appear throughout the game. Not all of them are as dramatic (nor are they all so shamelessly ripped from *Saving Private Ryan*), but they add a larger-than-life quality that players might expect from a game like this. They also offer a nice reward for having worked your way through a difficult level (there are no cut-scenes).

The Snipertown mission promises to be one of the most difficult because it's so hard to tell where the enemy is. In combat, that often results in soldiers getting killed. In *Medal of Honor*, you'll have a compass in the interface that shows the direction the shots are coming from if you're getting hit. It may not be realistic, but you could argue that it gives you no more information than you'd obtain under real circumstances.

What's more important is the intelligence of the soldiers, both yours and theirs. Although the version I played wasn't complete, it was encouraging to see soldiers behaving in a number of different ways. Some soldiers will rush out at you, others will wait for you to come into range. Some soldiers will stand behind cover and fire a weapon blindly around the corner. Close quarters fighting may prompt a soldier to attack with his rifle butt. Friendly soldiers tend to fight well and help you out, but they're not always around to do so.

As in the original *Medal of Honor*, soldiers are able to throw grenades back at you or get up after they've been hit. It will pay to pause before throwing a

Bazooka rounds bounce off Panthers like spit wads. Your best bet is a good shot from the rear.

Get Your Buddies to Enlist

Gamers have been clamoring for a multiplayer D-Day experience for a long time, and *Medal of Honor* promises to deliver. We're not sure if it can compete with *Return to Castle Wolfenstein*'s excellent multiplayer, which has raised the bar to a pretty high level. But since both games were built with multiplayer in mind–and both use the rock-solid *Quake III* engine–*MOH* stands more than a fighting chance.

MOH will ship with 11 multiplayer maps that are different from the single-player levels. Seven of them are for Free-for-All Deathmatch, Team Deathmatch (Axis vs. Allies), and Round-Based Deathmatch (when you're dead, you're dead until the next round starts, à la *Counter-Strike*). Four of the maps will offer Objective-Based Team Play. The various maps cover Omaha Beach, a V2 rocket facility, Remagen, and even a very sniper-friendly Stalingrad.

You'll be able to choose from a large variety of player models and their uniforms, including several fetching sadomasochistic Nazi officer uniforms. Don't forget to click your heels like a good Kraut!

BROWNING AUTOMATIC RIFLE (BAR)
American soldiers first used the BAR in combat during World War I. It became legendary in WWII for its reliability and excellent combination of rapid fire and penetrating power. The BAR was used throughout all theaters in the war.

STIELHANDGRANATE
The famous "potato masher" consisted of a sheet-metal can containing a TNT charge mounted on a wooden handle. It wasn't as powerful as American grenades, but it could be thrown farther. Be careful, enemies can throw these back at you, and dogs can fetch them!

BAZOOKA
The bazooka was a metal tube that fired a shaped-charge grenade capable of knocking out tanks (or blowing their treads off). When the Germans captured one, they copied the design to produce the *Panzerschreck* ("Tank Terror"). This weapon has no secondary use.

M4A4 SHERMAN TANK
What the Sherman lacked in power and armor strength, the U.S. made up for in numerical superiority. Shermans eventually overcame Panzers like hyenas overcoming a lion. Players won't get to drive them, but they can operate the .50-caliber mounted on its roof.

KING TIGER TANK
Widely considered the best tank of the war, the 70-ton Tiger II was the heavyweight champ of WWII. Its sloped, thick armor made it almost invulnerable, while its huge 88mm gun could penetrate even the best Allied tanks. You'll get to take this baby on a joyride in *MOH* and fire its main gun to your heart's delight.

If you like blowing things to smithereens, not much compares with the awesome firepower of the King Tiger Anti-tank guns (left) and other tanks make easy pickings—provided you shoot them first.

grenade and to make sure anyone you've shot is dead. Single shots to the head can kill, but since they're difficult to target, it pays to aim for the center of the body. This is also important because every gun has a recoil. After shooting the Thompson and German MP 40, I wouldn't be surprised to learn that many victims of these weapons had their nuts shot off, because that's where you'll want to aim.

Catching a Tiger

The guys weren't amused when I told them our mission was to "seize Brest." I guess they just wanted to get on with it. Field reports revealed a King Tiger holed up at a Nazi HQ in the city's town hall. We had to take the town, clear out any snipers, capture the command post, and steal the tank. Come to think of it, there was nothing funny about it.

My tank crew had seen plenty of our Shermans ripped apart by Tigers, and they were eager to get some payback. We found the Tiger and took it on one helluva joyride. There wasn't a thing that Tiger's main gun couldn't destroy. We tore up buildings, blasted several Panzers, and must've run over half a dozen Krauts. If the burp gun had worked, we probably could've taken out even more.

—Lt. Mike Powell

"*Medal of Honor* games aren't very realistic; they just feel that way."

While the King Tiger is the only controllable vehicle in the game, *MOH* will also let you control mounted weapons in some vehicles. The gameplay sequences featuring these weapons are some of the game's most exciting, as you blast enemy soldiers, other vehicles, and even enemy aircraft with the big Browning .50 caliber.

You control the Tiger by driving with the arrow keys and aiming the turret with the mouse. The game predicates that you actually have a crew to help man the tank, so that you are essentially the vehicle's commander. Despite this there is no option to man the tank's machine guns.

The game's developer, 2015, realizes that they're taking major liberties with scenes like this. They also know that combat units never got orders to steal a King Tiger and use it to wreak havoc with the Germans. But, hey, it's a game. That's part of the fun.

Ultimately, it's elements like this that may be the deciding factor in how you feel about this game. Because *Medal of Honor* will even resort to shooting gallery-type scenes, in which German soldiers run from preset locations so you can gun them down with heavy machine guns. Some people might get a kick out of that. Others will find that it simply sacrifices too much realism for the sake of fun.

But that was the goal, according to Electronic Arts. "Truth be told, *Medal of Honor* games aren't very realistic at all; they just feel that way," says project leader Peter Hirschmann. He points to other elements, such as health kits and ammo packs that work equally in German and American weapons, as examples of how the game takes liberties for playability.

Because of this, *Allied Assault* should please the vast majority of action gamers who are looking for a more realistic WW II shooter than *Return to Castle Wolfenstein*. Although it may not be a combat sim in the strictest sense, the game captures enough of the historical flavor to satisfy most WWII buffs. And for those who can never get enough of the war to end all wars, this could be the closest you'll ever come to experiencing it for yourself.

See you on the other side of the beach.

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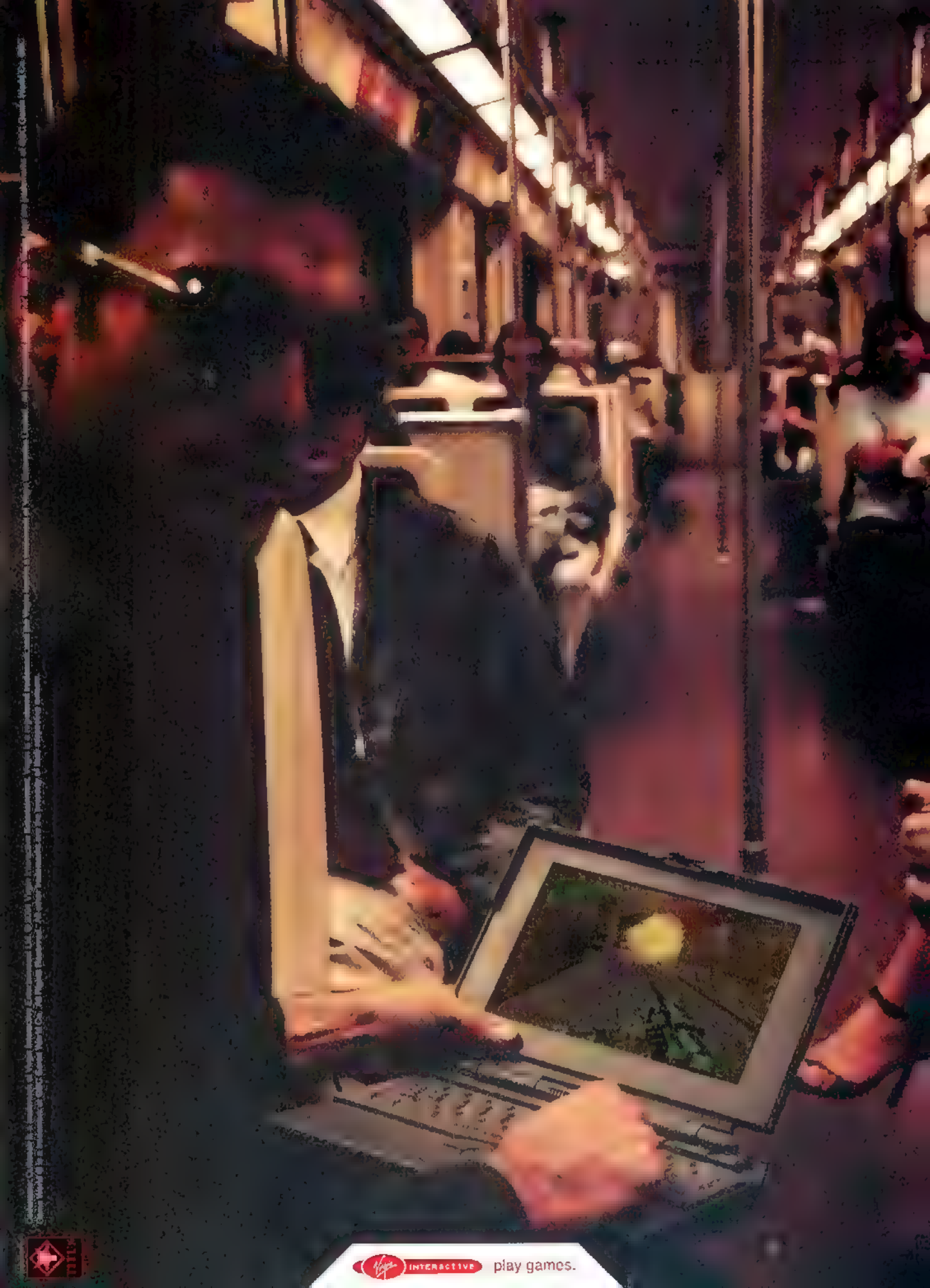
play games.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Very easy to use level editor: build new levels to play on-line and add scripts to items and enemies in real time.
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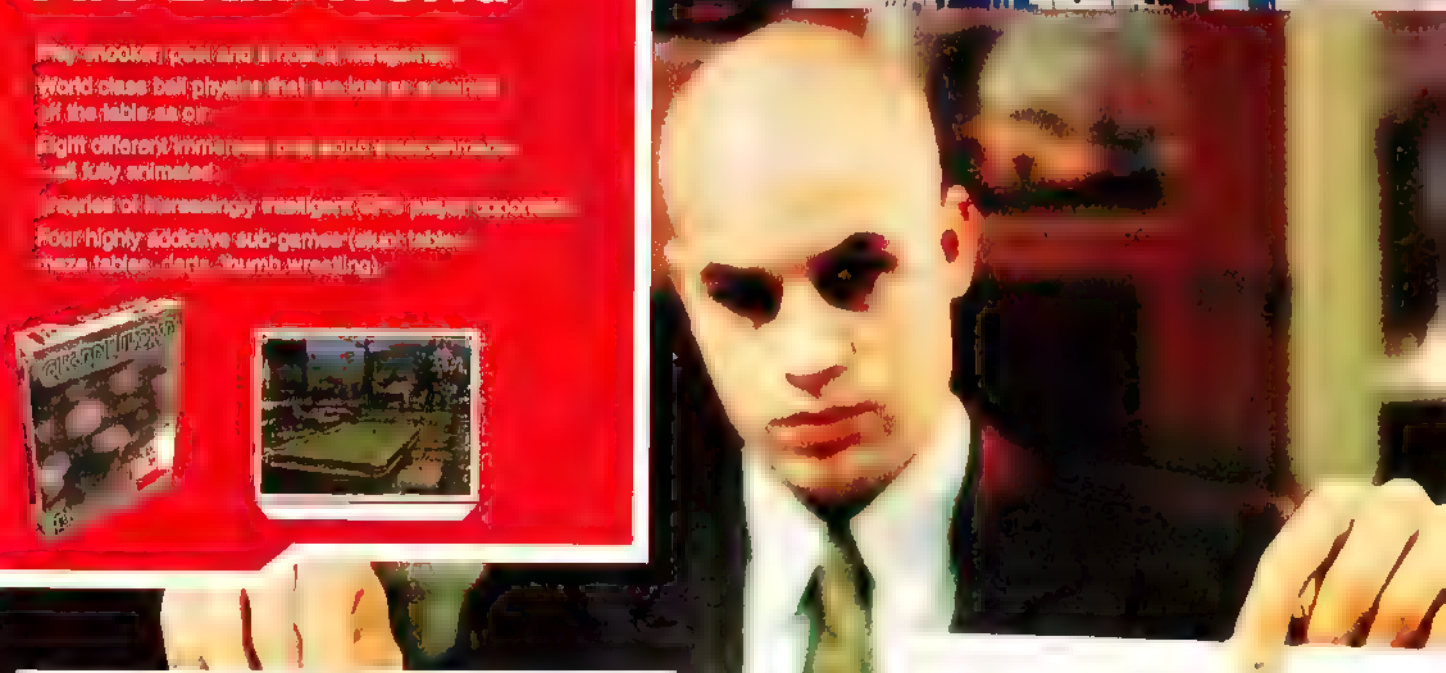

Anytime

Anywher

Hall of

The Cooperstown of computer games welcomes two classics and a game design legend

High Heat Baseball 2000

The heartbreak of a crucial error, the thrill of a dramatic home run, the brutal break of a devastating curveball, and the sickening, knee-buckling agony of watching *High Heat 2000*'s signature change up crawl right across the plate for a called strike three. These things made *High Heat 2000* not only the standard for computer baseball games, but the standard for PC sports games as well.

How many other games have so totally managed to capture the essence of this sport? With the notable exception of subsequent releases in the *High Heat* franchise, the answer is few to none. *High Heat* got all the big things right: the marathon of attrition that makes a full season; a robust, stats-driven engine; sharp graphics and animation. But it became great because it recognized how big the little things were. Nowhere was this more apparent than in the way its stellar pitcher-batter interface captured the pitch-by-pitch duel that is the beating heart of baseball.

But perhaps the surest evidence of *High Heat*'s value is this: Some of us are still compelled to play at least a game a day, virtually every day. If that won't get you into the Hall of Fame, what will?

Dark Forces II: Jedi Knight

When telling the tale of current story-driven shooters, one might be tempted to say that it began "a long time ago in a galaxy far, far away..." Before *Half-Life* blew us all away with its storytelling and execution, much of the foundation that shooters build upon today had been established by a wee game called *Jedi Knight*. Justin Chin's magnum opus brought many new elements to the shooter genre: massive outdoor levels that induce vertigo, a story tightly integrated with the action, the use of weapons other than guns, and action-driven character development. Besides, it was the first chance to use the Force Grip to choke some poor, stormtrooping half-wit.

It truly felt like a Jedi simulator; it took place outside of the *Star Wars* continuity, but it had the grandeur and melodrama appropriate for a space opera. The pacing was perfect, the Force powers were varied and interesting, and to this day many action designers confess that they feel the Falling Ship level is one of the best levels ever designed in a shooter. It's right up there with *TIE Fighter* as one of the best *Star Wars* games ever made.

For introducing and pulling together many of the elements that would be reflected in *Half-Life* and modern titles, and for making the greatest use of a licensed property, we induct *Jedi Knight* into our Hall of Fame.

Roberta Williams

It's hard enough to make a living in the gaming business. It's harder still to be truly successful at it. Now, to add to the challenge, try being a woman in this obnoxious, overwhelmingly male dominated business. But don't take that the wrong way—this has nothing to do with gender. Roberta Williams easily makes it into the *CGW* Hall of Fame by virtue of her talents and pioneering spirit alone.

In 1980, Williams designed the first graphic adventure, *Mystery House*, for the Apple II, and in so doing single handedly changed the course of computer gaming forever. *Mystery House* not only paved the way for point-and-click interfaces and graphics-based gaming, it also did well enough for Williams and her husband to found their own gaming company, Sierra On-Line, which of course grew into one of gaming's first and biggest dynasties. Through Sierra, Williams designed a host of other now-classic adventures, including the beloved *King's Quest* series and the horror-themed *Phantasmagoria*.

Williams is currently out of the gaming biz, but her legacy and influence persist to this day. She's a first-generation legend and a worthy addition to our Hall of Fame.

Fame

THE CGW HALL OF FAME

PEOPLE

Dani Bunten Berry, Game Designer
John Carmack, Programmer
Sid Meier, Game Designer

GAMES

Alone in the Dark (I-Motion, 1992)
The Bard's Tale (EA, 1985)
Battle Chess (Interplay, 1988)
Battleground series (TalonSoft, 1995–present)
Betrayal at Krondor (Dynamix, 1993)
Chessmaster (Software Toolworks, 1986)
Civilization (MicroProse, 1991)
Command & Conquer (Virgin/Westwood Studios, 1995)
Crusader: No Remorse (Origin, 1995)
Day of the Tentacle (LucasArts, 1993)
Diablo (Blizzard, 1997)
DOOM (id Software, 1993)
Dungeon Master (FTL Software, 1987)
Earl Weaver Baseball (EA, 1986)
Empire (Interstel, 1978)
F-19 Stealth Fighter (MicroProse, 1988)
Falcon 3.0 (Spectrum HoloByte, 1991)
Fallout (Interplay, 1997)
Front Page Sports: Football Pro (Dynamix, 1993)
Gettysburg: The Turning Point (SSI, 1986)
Grim Fandango (LucasArts, 1999)
Gunship (MicroProse, 1986)
Half-Life (Valve Software, 1998)
Harpoon (360 Pacific, 1989)
Heroes of Might and Magic II (New World Computing, 1997)
Kampfgruppe (SSI, 1985)
King's Quest V (Sierra On-Line, 1990)
Lemmings (Psygnosis, 1991)
Links 386 Pro (Access Software, 1992)
M-1 Tank Platoon (MicroProse, 1989)
Master of Magic (MicroProse, 1994)
Master of Orion (MicroProse, 1993)
Mech Brigade (SSI, 1985)
MechWarrior 2 (Activision, 1995)
Might and Magic (New World Computing, 1986)
M.U.L.E. (EA, 1983)
Myth (Bungie, 1997)
Panzer General (SSI, 1994)
Pirates! (MicroProse, 1987)
Quake (id Software, 1996)
Railroad Tycoon (MicroProse, 1990)
Red Baron (Dynamix, 1990)
The Secret of Monkey Island (LucasArts, 1990)
SimCity (Maxis, 1987)
StarCraft (Blizzard, 1998)
Starflight (EA, 1986)
Tetris (Spectrum HoloByte, 1988)
Their Finest Hour (LucasArts, 1989)
TIE Fighter (LucasArts, 1994)
Tomb Raider (Eidos, 1996)
Ultima III (Origin Systems, 1983)
Ultima IV (Origin Systems, 1985)
Ultima VI (Origin Systems, 1990)
Ultima Underworld (Origin Systems, 1992)
War in Russia (SSI, 1984)
WarCraft II (Blizzard, 1996)
Wasteland (Interplay, 1986)
Wing Commander (Origin Systems, 1990)
Wing Commander II (Origin Systems, 1991)
Wing Commander III (Origin Systems, 1994)
Wizardry (Sir-Tech, 1981)
Wolfenstein 3-D (id Software, 1992)
X-COM (MicroProse, 1994)
You Don't Know Jack (Berkeley Systems, 1996)
Zork (Infocom, 1981)

Ray: Everything was fine with our system until the power grid was shut off by discless here.

Walter Peck: They caused an explosion!

Mayor: Is this true?

Venkman: Yes, it's true. This mag has no disc.

The world's best XBOX magazine.
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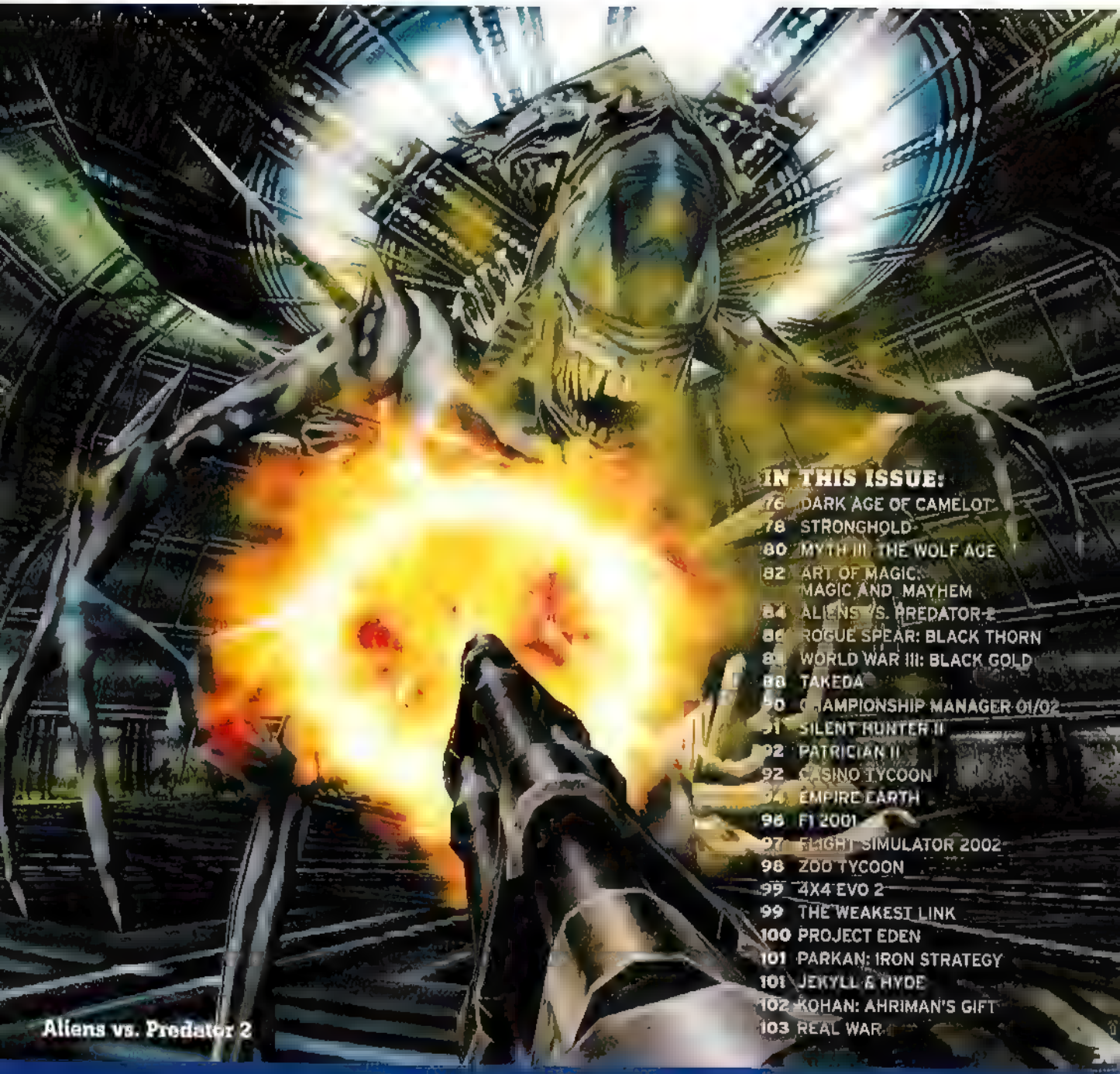
Premiere Issue On Sale December 11

Reviews

We love games, we hate games Edited by Robert Coffey



Aliens vs. Predator 2

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How Do We Rate?

We review only finished games–no betas, no patches

CGW EDITORS' CHOICE

OUTSTANDING The rare game that gets it all right. A must-play experience.

★★★★½ **VERY GOOD** Worthy of your time and money but there are drawbacks.

★★½ **AVERAGE** Either an ambitious design with major flaws, or just vanilla.

★★★ **WEAK** Seriously lacking in play value, poorly conceived, or just another clone.

★★★★ **ABYSMAL** The rare game that gets it all wrong. Pathetic. Coaster material.

Horses are like streetcars in *Dark Age*. They run only prescribed routes.

Dark Age of Camelot

Mythic sallies forth with a hit **By Mark Asher**

PUBLISHER Vivendi
DEVELOPER Mythic Entertainment URL www.darkageofcamelot.com ESRB RATING Teen; violence PRICE $39.95, $12.95 per month after 30 days

REQUIREMENTS Pentium II 450, 128MB RAM, 3D accelerator, 650MB hard drive space
RECOMMENDED REQUIREMENTS 256MB RAM
MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT Internet

In days of olde when knights were bolde and scribes apparently had lots of leftover e's, King Arthur and his knights did go forth and battle monsters both vile and deadly, cleanse the realm of evil and land many profitable book and movie deals. Flash forward to modern times. A little known veteran game company Mythic Entertainment, now attempts to go forth into the increasingly crowded massively multiplayer marketplace with an online RPG loosely associated with Arthurian legend in the way that Heidi Fleiss is loosely associated with moral behavior. How's Mythic done with *Dark Age of Camelot*? Forsooth, we have a winner here.

Building a Better Mousetrap

It's obvious that Mythic has looked closely at earlier massively multiplayer games and modeled *Dark Age* after them, with *EverQuest* clearly being the biggest influence. Mythic has taken the best from these games and fixed the rest. Hate long rest times to regain health or mana? In *Dark Age* you seldom have to rest more than a minute, and often not at all. Don't like the game mechanics forcing you to group? In *Dark Age* you never really have to. Don't like having to retrieve your corpse when killed? In *Dark Age* all you lose are some experience points if you abandon your cadaver, never items or money. Providing many more fixes like this, Mythic has clearly done a great job with the underlying game mechanics, making sure that the fun stuff is emphasized and the drudgery minimized.

Dark Age of Camelot is a class-based, level based online RPG, with a skill system tossed in as well—pretty standard stuff. The premise is simple: Run around, bash monsters, get experience points and loot and gain that level. It's almost hypnotic.

There's a ton of variety among the classes, and the ones I've played (Cleric, Wizard, Thane) have provided a unique, interesting experience. With each level gain, you get training points to invest in a skill. Each class typically has at least three skill branches, but you can't keep each branch fully developed, so you have to pick and choose. For example, Wizards can invest points in earth, ice, and fire spell branches. I've dumped

Run around, bash monsters, get experience points and loot, and gain that level. It's almost hypnotic.

I can't pronounce this thing's name, but I can kill it and that's good enough for me.

Ha ha! This monster tree doesn't like my flame spells.

Either players love skeletons or game designers are all reading the same design books, because you can't swing a mace without hitting a pile of animated bones in most games.

service. It's been poor. Mythic has been overwhelmed by the popularity of *Dark Age*, and player complaints are simply not getting replies in a timely fashion. A friend spent 12 hours on a quest that turned out to be broken and didn't give him the item he earned. His complaint has gone unanswered for a week now.

It's a Small World

The gameworld's a bit thin on content. There are only five dungeons in each realm and some are unfinished—they're playable, but the monsters drop only money when they're killed instead of cool items. I suspect that the non-RvR high-level content may be spotty too, though it's hard to tell from just one month's play. The thing that bugs me the most though, is the monotonous landscape. You see either more trees or fewer trees, more grass or less, flat land or hills, and that's it. The graphics are good and the character models and animation really shine, especially the spell animations,

The gameplay's the thing, and in *Dark Age* it's the best I've yet experienced in an online RPG.

almost all my points into fire, so I can do more damage with only my fireballs than the Wizard who has split training points into all three lines.

Dark Age is divided into three realms: Albion (Arthurian), Midgard (Norse), and Hibernia (Celtic). Your character is essentially limited to his home realm; two-thirds of the game is cut off from you unless you play multiple characters. This seemingly curious design decision ties in with the high level, team-versus-team combat that Mythic calls Realm versus Realm, or RvR. When you hit level 19, you can buy transport to lands where you fight other realms for control of keeps and magic artifacts. My limited experience with the RvR has been less than satisfying. The playing field is never level—a higher level player will almost always defeat you should you meet. Also, the level-based combat system is such that a group of level 20 players can't even scratch a level 35 player.

Another thorny issue is the customer

but the scenery could use more variety.

The gameplay's the thing, though, and in *Dark Age* it's the best I've yet experienced in an online RPG. The combat and magic system offer interesting tactics, and the varied classes provide a lot of fascinating group dynamics. Sorcerers can screw with the heads of monsters while the Armsman hacks at them and the Cleric heals and the Rogue backstabs, all while the Wizard readies the big fireball to finish the battle. All online games are works in progress and Mythic needs to address some problems. If they do and continue to add content as promised, King Arthur's crown should fit them well.

For strategy tips on Dark Age of Camelot, go to page 126.

VERDICT ★★★★½

In many ways this is the best massively multiplayer game yet, but it's not as complete as it should be.

Castle sieges are huge, brutal affairs. Victory on either side hinges on smart unit deployment and exploitation of terrain and defensive structures.

Stronghold

Love it or besiege it! Firefly Studios plays for keeps By Johnny L. Wilson

PUBLISHER GodGames
DEVELOPER Firefly Studios
URL www.godgames.com
ESRB RATING Teen; blood, violence PRICE $44.99

REQUIREMENTS Pentium II 300, 64MB RAM, 750MB hard drive space RECOMMENDED Pentium II 600, 128MB RAM
MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT LAN, Internet, GameSpy (2-4 players)

Stronghold is an aristocrat of medieval simulations. It takes the castle-building simulation to its highest level yet.

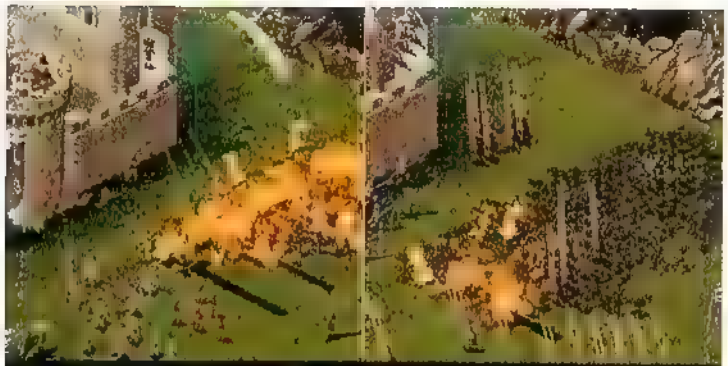
Although *Stronghold* does try to please two types of players—would-be generals managing defenses and sieges and would-be seneschals managing economies—it doesn't mix turn-based strategy and real-time battle. The meter is perpetually running in *Stronghold*. Even when players are simply trying to feed and shelter the simulated population, the fuse is burning and there is a sense of urgency. Military strategists must constantly balance the need for guns and butter as they try to feed their population and build the battlements while simultaneously attempting to build military forces and facing waves of attackers. It's a delicate balance, and that's where the challenge of the game can be found. The military campaign consists of 21 hard-wired scenarios that move you from managing a small foraging effort up to constructing massive stone castles complete with armies, moats, and boiling oil. The good news is that everything proceeds logically so you're never overwhelmed.

Similarly, the economic campaign (much shorter than the military campaign, with only five scenarios) allows you to start with the basics of direct supply and demand. You simply begin from a keep (Saxon hall, wooden keep, or stone keep) and build up a medieval settlement that can support a full-blown castle. This requires weaving through a daisy chain of economic development. The flow chart for economic goods is simple, but it does reward logical placement of raw materials generators and storage vis-à-vis food processors and craftsmen. In a game where the onscreen characters actually walk from shop to stockpile to shop to storage, logistical arrangements play a vital role. *Stronghold* does a delicate dance to make this aspect fun and is even more like a medieval *SimCity* than Hasbro's *Majesty* turned out to be.

In addition to the two story-based campaigns, you can also play individual combat scenarios, experiment with free-form castle building, play multiplayer matches via GameSpy, and design your own maps.

To the Battlements

Stronghold offers four difficulty levels from Easy to Very Hard. Even at the lower difficulty levels, however, you'll need sound tactics and a few tricks to seize the day. Because the death of your lord means automatic defeat, you'll need to protect him with archers and a pikeman or two for the inevitable breakthrough. You also must take care when constructing your citadel, noting the signposts dotting the land because those points are where attacks begin. As is true



After the first wave of invaders is burned alive amid troughs of pitch, the next wave rushes forward for hand-to-hand combat.

Battles turn desperate when attackers breach your walls and take the fight inside.

Stronghold does a great job of depicting the bucolic farming life that provided the backbone of the medieval economy.

Even when players are simply trying to feed and shelter the simulated population, the fuse is burning and there is a sense of urgency.

A simple navigational tool lets you zoom out and turn the map to monitor your growing castle and community.

In real warfare, combined arms are vital: For superior results you need archers softening up the attackers and providing counterarcher fire while the footmen and horsemen engage in melee. Leaving your pikemen and knights inside during a siege is virtually useless until the enemy breaches the walls and enters the courtyard. Taken together with the economic side of the game, you're never at a loss for something urgent to do.

Cracks in the Wall

And yet, for all of its good points, *Stronghold* doesn't quite claim the throne. A few simple problems detract from the joys of its successes. For starters, the view is inadequate. Although *Stronghold* allows players to rotate the view in 90-degree increments, this isn't always sufficient for determining whether a wall portion fits neatly into the rest of the wall or has occasional gaps. This creates problems with stockade walls and can also be nasty when you're attaching walls to gatehouses or areas partially blocked by cliff sides or other rough terrain. *Stronghold* needs a mouse-look style of rotation to assist players with exact wall and building placement.

This could only help in planning around the limited maps—too often, castle builders will find themselves having to build strange and unrealistic corners because they have come to the edge of the map and it abruptly stops scrolling. More important, the restricted map areas keep you from being able to create many open killing zones (areas of clear land, ditches, and moats that allow defenders to fire at would-be attackers with impunity) either inside or outside the walls themselves.

In spite of a strategic map that cries out for a dynamic campaign, *Stronghold*'s campaign is unfortunately hard-coded and linear. No matter how well you do in a scenario, you start the next scenario with a fixed amount of resources. Uneven voice-acting and sophomoric characters in the cut-scenes take away from the outstanding quality of in-game graphics and animations.

Worth the Pilgrimage

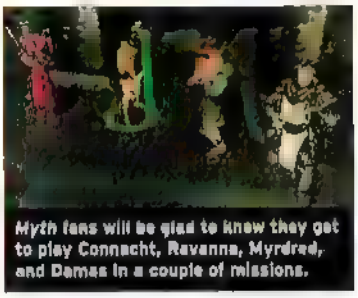
Stronghold has a few problems but also numerous strengths. The problems do not constitute a dangerous breach in your enjoyment and the strengths provide assured victory. Whether you play as a solitaire gamer in an ongoing campaign, prefer multiplayer match ups, want to design a castle for your *D&D* campaign, or simply want the equivalent of a medieval *SimCity*, *Stronghold* deserves your fealty.

VERDICT ★★★★½

***Stronghold*'s deft mix of economic, building, and combat challenges makes it one of the best strategy games of the year.**

You want carnage? Here's your friggin' carnage.

The new 3D models keep these warlocks looking good even after they're ground into paste by the giant Trow Iron Warriors.



Myth fans will be glad to know they get to play Connacht, Ravenna, Myrdred, and Damas in a couple of missions.

Myth III: The Wolf Age

Third time's the charm **By Raphael Liberatore**

PUBLISHER GodGames
DEVELOPER Mumbo Jumbo
URL www.mythwolfage.com
ESRB RATING Mature; blood and violence, gore
PRICE $44.99

REQUIREMENTS Pentium II 400, 96MB RAM, 250MB hard drive space; Mac compatible (MacSoft)
RECOMMENDED REQUIREMENTS Pentium III 600, 128MB RAM, 500MB hard drive space
MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT Internet, LAN, GameSpy (2-16 players)

The folks at Bungie can relax. Mumbo Jumbo took the baton handed to them when Microsoft devoured Bungie, and they ran with it, creating a great addition to Bungie's outstanding *Myth* series. *The Wolf Age* takes place 1,000 years before *Myth: The Fallen Lords* and follows the life of Connacht the Wolf, a legendary barbarian warrior battling with the forces of light against the malevolent Moagrim and his nasty hordes. As always, a gripping story drives the game's real-time tactical fantasy combat.

Myth III is vastly superior to the previous *Myth* games. Gone are mediocre sprites, now replaced with drop-dead gorgeous 3D units and terrain. Units have plenty of animations that look great when zoomed in, and terrain effects such as swaying trees, translucent pools, murky forests, and shadows enrich the game experience. *Myth III* also offers smoother camera control. Although I did encounter a bug with the initial cut-scene, the amount of detail provided before and after each mission is characteristic of the depth of the *Myth* series.

The 25 missions are challenging even for diehard *Myth* players. Levels are well thought out and varied, offering a balanced mix of units and objectives for an improved tactical game full of choices. With labyrinths, crypts, and dark swamps, each map is well worth exploring even after you've achieved the mission goals. Missions are never dull, with 40 unit types dispersed throughout the game. There's even a variety of Dwarves, from Molotov cocktail-tossing Demolition types (which seem to have gotten better at not tossing explosives into their own troops) to heavily armored Dwarven Axe-Warriors dispatched to defend them in melee. With so many new units, you might expect some topsided unit dispositions, but Mumbo Jumbo did a stellar job of balancing the game. Even the once-feared Trow is now slower and possible to retreat from. Although the general interface remains the same, some tweaks and enhancements such as easier access to groupings, formations, and waypoints have improved the game.

It's a good thing *Myth III*'s single-player game is so strong because multiplayer can be a muck pit.

It's a good thing *Myth III*'s single-player game is so strong because the multiplayer mode can be somewhat of a muck pit. Not only has the ever-popular bungie.net been replaced with the mediocre GameSpy, but the game is missing the mapmaking tools promised on the box. The lack of an editor is lamentable—the Vengeance tool set has really allowed the *Myth* mod community to thrive. (Vengeance should be available as a download later.) Plus, the initial list of *Myth III*'s multiplayer maps and game types is paltry compared to the original *Myth* offerings.

The Wolf Age has limited Windows XP support, and a number of players have compiled an impressive list of bugs online. However, aside from the cut-scene and some collision detection problems, I failed to experience any of these bugs, and I played *The Wolf Age* on multiple systems. Your mileage may vary. A patch addressing many of these concerns should be out by the time you read this, and that's good because *Myth III: The Wolf Age* provides one of the most engaging *Myth* experiences to date.

VERDICT ★★★★½

There's no editor and the multiplayer is underwhelming, but *Myth III*'s single-player game is strong enough to warrant our recommendation.

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Art of Magic: Magic and Mayhem

Harry Potter isn't the only nifty wizard around **By Mark Asher**

PUBLISHER Bethesda Softworks
DEVELOPER Climax
URL www.art-of-magic.co.uk
ESRB RATING Teen, blood, animated violence
PRICE $39.99

REQUIREMENTS Pentium II 300, 64MB RAM, 1GB hard drive space
RECOMMENDED REQUIREMENTS Pentium III 500, 128MB RAM
MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT LAN, Internet (2-8 players)

The main character Aurax with two companions and an army of summoned creatures. These summoned creatures do the bulk of your fighting for you.

You won't have to worry about having enough interface choices.

Mixing and matching elements in your portmanteau lets you create your spell set prior to each scenario.

Nowadays, every new game offers a RuPaul experience–what you see may not be what you get once you've peeled off a few layers.

In the old days when we had to walk six miles uphill to a Radio Shack to buy computer games that came in plastic baggies, strategy games were strategy games and RPGs were RPGs, and we liked it that way! Nowadays, there's so much genre-blurring and crossing over that every new game offers a RuPaul experience–what you see may not be what you get once you've peeled off a few layers. That's the case with *Art of Magic*, which combines strategy and RPG elements. And guess what? We like it that way too!

Art of Magic is the sequel to 1997's *Magic and Mayhem*, a game developed by the famed and now-disbanded Mythos Games (X-COM). Mythos was busy working on the now-cancelled *Dreamland*, so Charybdis began working on the sequel. Charybdis then went under before the game was complete, and Climax took over development to finish the title.

You'd think that so many chefs would oversalt the soup, but *Art of Magic* is a tasty dish. It's mostly a tactical spell-casting combat game centered around summoned creatures, though it also has a strong RPG vein with experience points and stat boosts for the main character, Aurax, who grows in power as the game progresses.

As a tactical game, it's really quite good. The resources are mana, the number of creatures that Aurax can summon, and the spell portmanteau. The portmanteau really gives the game its unique flavor. You have spell ingredients that you can mix and match with different orbs (chaos, neutral, and law) to create different spells. You can shuffle your portmanteau before any mission, but not during it. The result is that you have a wide range of potential spells, but a limited range of usable spells during a mission. So you can replay a mission with a completely different group of spells and tactics.

The story is more integrated into the game this time, though a lot of plot twists are telegraphed and the voice acting is sometimes hard to take. Aurax has a thick Welsh (I think) accent, and one of his companions sounds like a Jamaican version of an *Amos 'n' Andy* character. In the story, Aurax seeks revenge but finds that he must also save the land from evil while pursuing vengeance and *...zzzzzzzz*. The story's not *that* bad, but I found myself wishing that Aurax would sex up a wood nymph or something just to stir things up.

The game comes with more than 30 single-player missions linked to form a campaign. The missions vary nicely, from defending a town, to sneaking into a troll's camp to steal an item, to being thrust into the middle of a barroom brawl with drunken wizards.

Art of Magic also includes a robust skirmish mode and multiplayer games. The multiplayer games are lots of fun if you can find players. I played a few and the battles really seesaw back and forth–good stuff, and maybe worth that six mile walk.

VERDICT ★★★★½

***Art of Magic* conjures up an engaging mix of tactical combat and RPG gameplay with good replay value thanks to skirmish and multiplayer options.**

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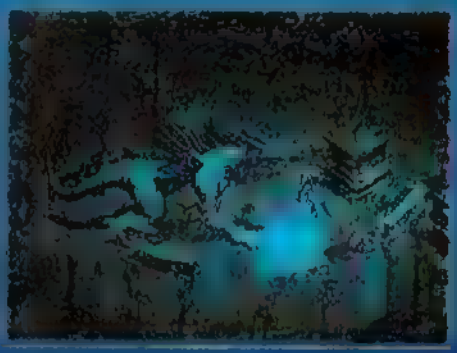

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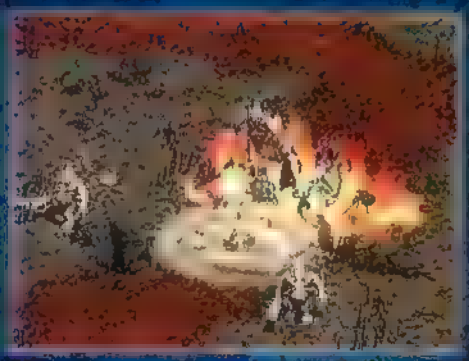

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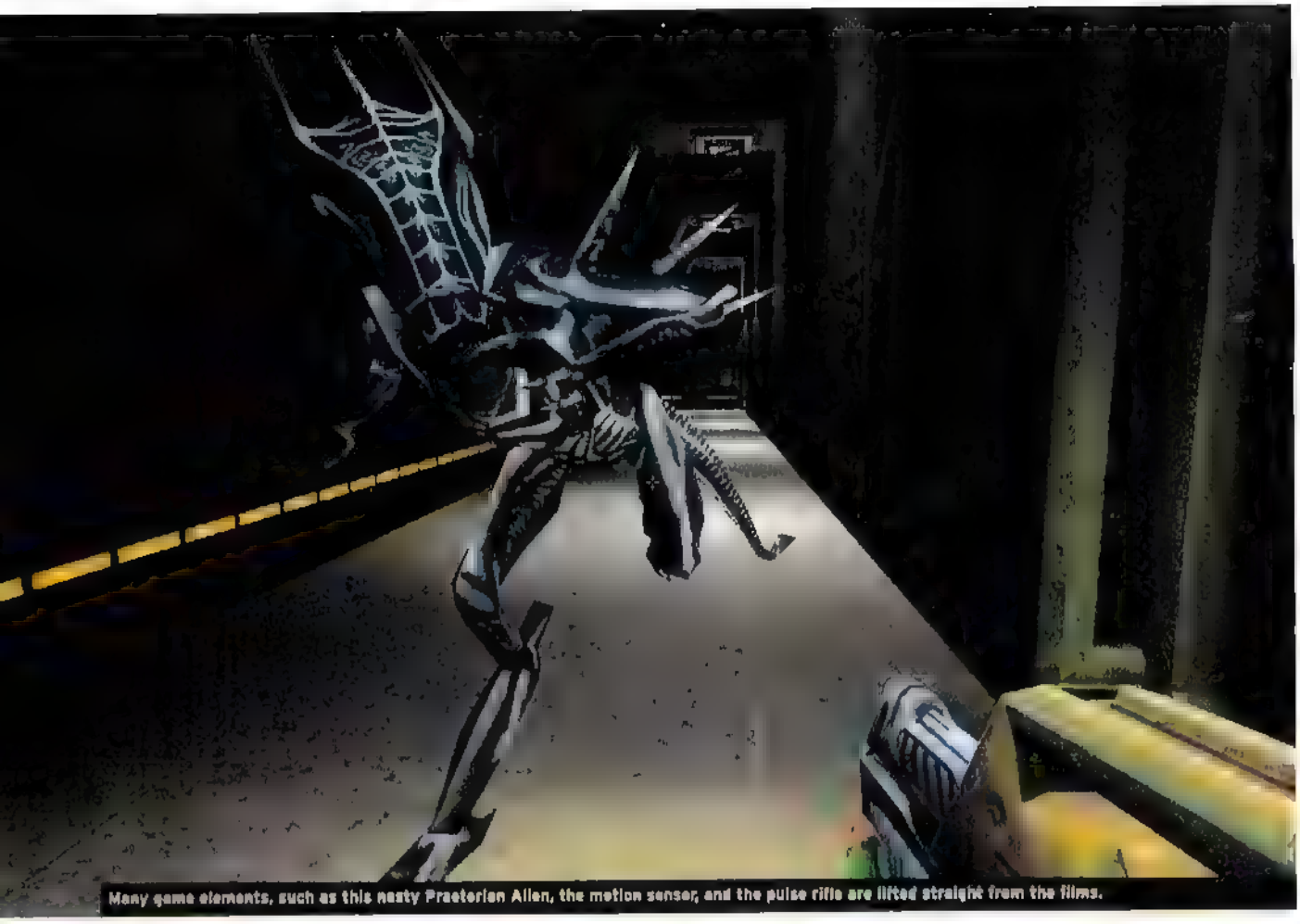


Many game elements, such as this nasty Praetorian Alien, the motion sensor, and the pulse rifle are lifted straight from the films.

Aliens Versus Predator 2

Monolith heard us scream before, and they make things right this time By Thierry Nguyen

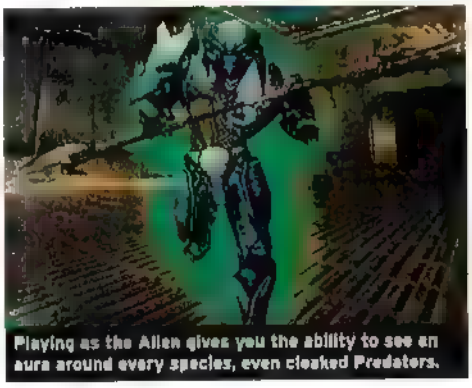
PUBLISHER Sierra
DEVELOPER Monolith
URL avp2.sierra.com
ESRB RATING Mature: blood and gore, strong language, violence
PRICE $49.95

REQUIREMENTS Pentium III 450, 128MB RAM, 750MB hard drive space
RECOMMENDED REQUIREMENTS Pentium III 600, 256MB RAM
MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT LAN, Internet (2-16 players)

Talk about your educational software. *Aliens Versus Predator 2 (AvP2)* will perhaps be the only game that involves you in impregnation, the belly-bursting birth itself, and immediate postnatal care. There are a zillion other games that simulate marine combat, use alien hunting tactics, and offer cinematic action, but *AvP2* has the birth-simulation corner locked.

Witness the Resurrection

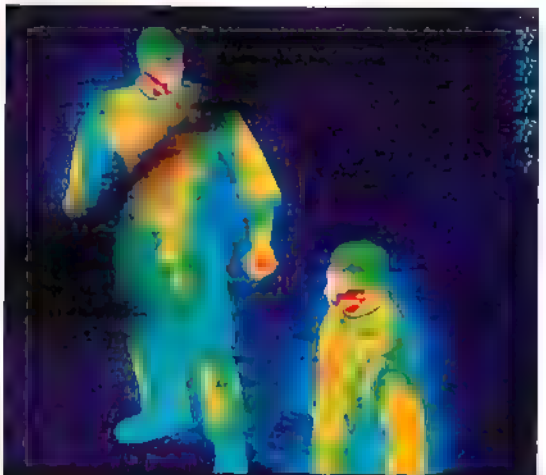
Like the original, *AvP2*'s single-player game comprises three campaigns, each planting you firmly in the role of a Marine, Predator, or Alien throughout. Each campaign begins as an extended tutorial easing you slowly into the mechanics of playing each race before requiring mastery of the skills in the late game. The campaigns unfold as expected: As a Marine you play a straightforward action shoot-'em-up, while as the Predator you're slower, sneakier, and more deliberate, following the hunting mentality established in the movies and comics. The Alien is simply a mobile slaughtering machine, furiously climbing the walls and shredding anyone in the way. I prefer the Predator and Alien campaigns, if only because they're so different from the humdrum Marine, which plays out like many other shooters. And, yes, you can save anywhere now, though the hardcore difficulty level disables the save anywhere function in a nod to true old-school *AvP* gamers.



Playing as the Alien gives you the ability to see an aura around every species, even cloaked Predators.

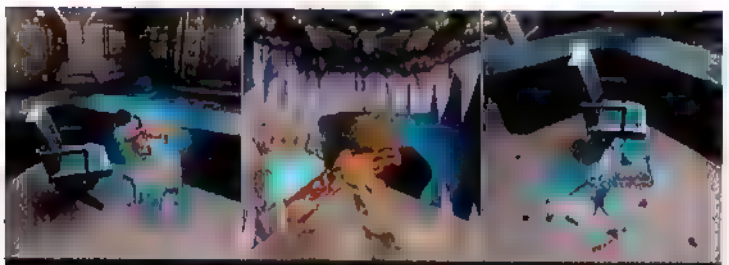
In most shooters, plot is still an afterthought, but Monolith went ahead and created an elaborate puzzle of a story for *AvP2*. Fusing elements of *Rashomon* and *Pulp Fiction*, *AvP2*'s story juggles perspective and chronology to make you think twice about what the hell is really going on. Quite often, you'll notice the little marker date and utter, "Wait, is this when I...?" The best example of the game's interlocked perspectives is when the Marine frees a Predator, an Alien

The Alien orientation system can be utterly confusing. Monolith should have opted for more "floor here" cues like this one instead of the HUD's weird arrow system.



Just as they did in the movie, Predators can activate thermal vision to spot humans cloaked or hiding in the trees.

The sheer fun of face-hugging some twit online has yet to be eclipsed.



While the Predator and Marine can heal via healthpacks or inventory items, Aliens must munch on enemy heads to gain health.

The heavy use of scripted scenes makes for a cinematic experience, but at the cost of replay value.

runs to the same room beforehand, and a Predator then witnesses both the Alien and the Marine scenes. Taking a cue from *No One Lives Forever* and *System Shock 2*, *AvP2* uses incidental conversations and text devices (PDAs, computer email) to help flesh out the backstory. Occasionally I would replay levels just to mine more plot. But this use of incidentals instead of straightforward narrative might be off-putting to some.

GAME OVER, MAN!

Because of the quirky nature of the storyline, we asked William Westwater, designer and producer of *AvP2* for Monolith, to tell us the order in which gamers should play the missions to experience the plot in proper chronological order (the first letter designates the race): A-Birth, A-Surprise, A-Escape, P-Hunt, P-Trap, P-Interloper, M-Unwelcome Guests, M-Collateral Damage, M-Betrayal, A-Vengeance, P-Unexpected Allies, M-A Long Detour, A-Abduction, P-Old Debts, M-Price of Admission, M-Loose Ends, A-Pursuit, P-New Target, M-Savior, P-Trophy, A-Freedom.

AvP2 is one of those games that because so much is good, the flaws smack the game even harder. In a surprising backslide from Monolith's stellar *NOLF* AI, the AI in *AvP2* is very inconsistent. Sometimes I can snipe soldiers with reckless abandon, but at other times mercenaries exhibit team tactics. Both Marines and Aliens employ *Doom*-style, rush-the-player tactics. The best AI goes to the Predator, who sneaks around rather than running at you.

Given all the effort made to emulate the movie, why isn't there any sense of team combat in the Marine campaign? Instead, all sorts of contrived situations get you alone, and you buddy up only with Marines who end up dying in scripted events. The Alien campaign lacks a sense of teamwork as well. I expected a horde assault, not isolated scripted events of just three Aliens at a time.

The heavy scripting dampens replay value, especially in the Marine campaign, where all fright and tension were lost because I already knew where everything was. Performance issues came up as well—playing with less than the optimal 256MB of RAM resulted in occasional hiccups and slowdowns. Finally, the Alien's wall-walking indicators on the HUD are noble in design intent but utterly confusing.

If It Bleeds, We Can Kill It

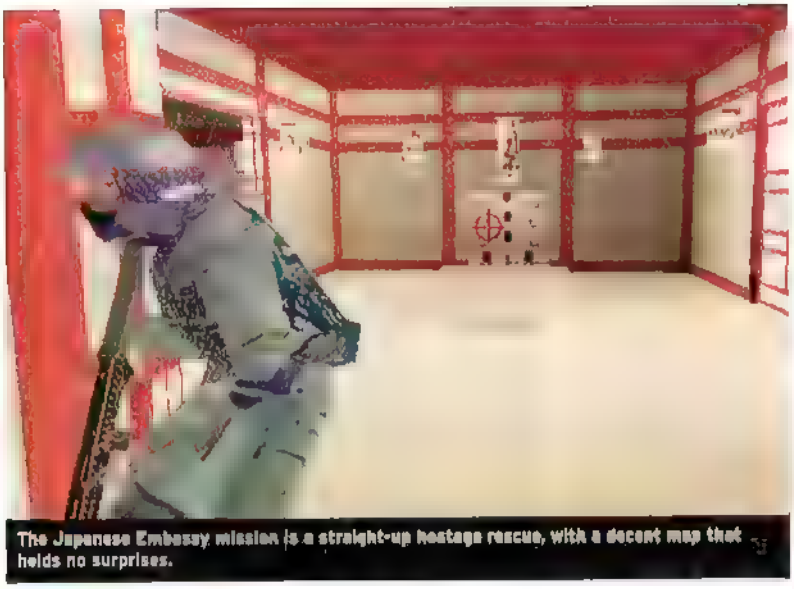
AvP2's multiplayer mode is where it all comes together. There are a multitude of play modes, but even the straightforward deathmatch and team deathmatch games are a blast, thanks to the species structure. The only downside is that the net code isn't quite up to snuff like that of, say, *Counter-Strike*, *UT*, or *O3A*, so there is lag (even on my DSL line). Still, the sheer fun of face-hugging some poor twit online has yet to be eclipsed.

The playful narrative structure of the single player game combined with the great multiplayer modes make *AvP2* a damn fine game, if not quite five-star material. Monolith has taken lessons both good (*NOLF*) and bad (*Blood 2*) to craft one of the year's best shooters.

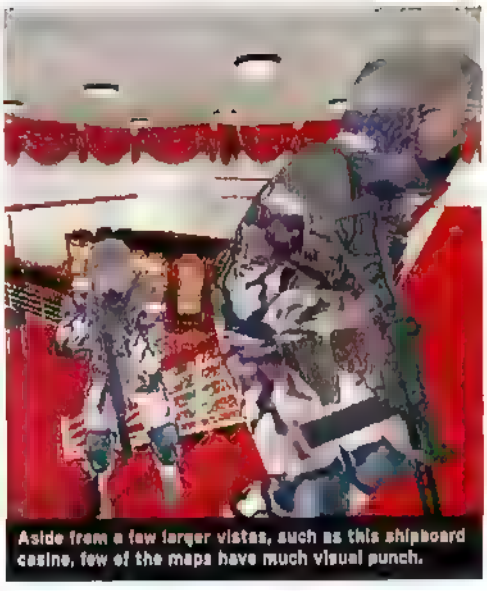
For strategy tips on Aliens Versus Predator 2, *go to page 122.*

VERDICT ★★★★½

Solid single-player mode and chest-bursting mayhem in multiplayer catapults this to an Editor's Choice.



The Japanese Embassy mission is a straight-up hostage rescue, with a decent map that holds no surprises.



Aside from a few larger vistas, such as this shipboard casino, few of the maps have much visual punch.

Rogue Spear: Black Thorn

Two years of quality gaming conclude with the final *Rogue Spear* mission set By Thomas L. McDonald

PUBLISHER Ubi Soft
DEVELOPER Red Storm
URL www.redstorm.com
ESRB RATING Mature, blood, violence
PRICE $29.95

REQUIREMENTS Pentium II 266, 64MB RAM, 550MB hard drive space
RECOMMENDED REQUIREMENTS Pentium III 500, 128MB RAM
MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT LAN, Internet (2-16 players)

Gamers confronting *Rogue Spear: Black Thorn* snuggled up next to *Ghost Recon* at their local software store can be forgiven their confusion. Here we have the final drops of milk from an aged engine squeezed dry (*Rogue Spear*) vying for consumer attention with the cutting edge, brand spanking-new *Ghost Recon*, with only about $10 separating the two. It wasn't supposed to be this way. Marketing types planned to get *Black Thorn* out at least a month or more before *Ghost Recon*, slipping one more *Rogue Spear* title into the channel and priming the pump for the next installment in the franchise. Not a terrible plan, actually, but September 11 changed all that. Red Storm delayed the release and stripped out aspects of the game that would have been in poor taste in the wake of the attacks.

Black Thorn is unlikely to get attention from any but the most dedicated *Rogue Spear* fans, most of whom are busy with *Ghost Recon*.

Black Thorn is unlikely to get much attention from any but the most dedicated *Rogue Spear* fans and online gamers, most of whom are busy with *Ghost Recon*. Unremarkable in its familiarity, it delivers new campaign missions and multiplayer maps in a stand-alone expansion set. Some sort of story attempts to tie the nine new missions together, but it's buried safely in the part of mission briefing that I read with the kind of attention I usually reserve for license agreements.

The nine locations are good if unexciting, and include a bus station, African village, jungle camp, embassy, convent, center, hotel, cruise ship, and hospital. Missions are straight-up rescues with few surprises; some special goals, such as defusing a bomb, are thrown in for diversity. The mission requiring you to snipe a bus driver is irritating, because it makes you start over if you take enemy fire. For people with tactical shooter experience, the game will provide a decent but not insane level of challenge. Although missions aren't particularly difficult (aside from Africa), they may not be the way for newcomers to get their chops. *Black Thorn* was originally slated to have 10 missions, but the rescue on a hijacked plane was cut.

I counted 10 newish weapons- Red Storm claims "almost a dozen." (Why almost"? Don't they know?) This is the sort of statement that used to impress me back when I was easily impressed. Now it just sounds like 10 new weapons which will feel pretty much like 10 old weapons to everyone but charter subscribers to *Soldier of Fortune* magazine and maybe Raphael Liberatore.

Despite being at the very end of its life cycle, *Rogue Spear* still offers some effective visuals.

The selling point of *Rogue Spear* is the multiplayer support. It has six new MP only maps in addition to the nine campaign maps. *Black Thorn* also makes the Lone Wolf mod an official part of the game: One player is stalked by all the rest, with the person who kills them becoming "It." *Rogue Spear* remains popular online, so *Black Thorn*'s multiplayer additions will be its main attraction. The rest is fine if unexciting.

VERDICT ★★★½☆

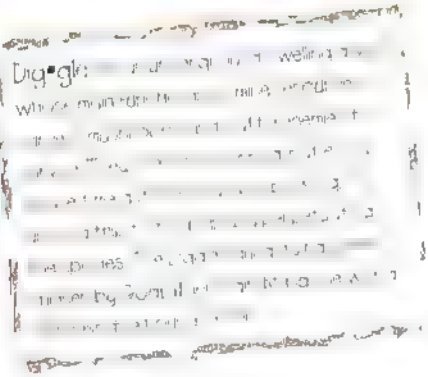
A perfectly fine mission set that will be welcomed mostly for its multiplayer additions.

DWARVES WITH ATTITUDE

Diggles

"The game combines the best features from such hits as 'The Sims' and 'Creatures.'"

«Mega Games»



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World War III: Black Gold

Do I really want to play a game with suicide bombers and chemical weapons? By Thomas L. McDonald

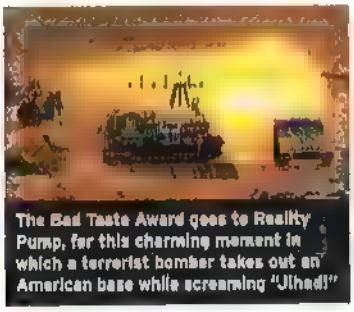
PUBLISHER JoWood Productions
DEVELOPER Reality Pump
URL worldwar3.jowood.de
ESRB RATING Teen; violence
PRICE $29.99

REQUIREMENTS Pentium MMX 300, 32MB RAM, 200MB hard drive space RECOMMENDED REQUIREMENTS Pentium III 450, 128MB RAM MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT LAN, Internet (2-8 players)

After September 11, there was talk of postponing *World War III: Black Gold*—a game of contemporary warfare set in the Arab world—due to the subject matter. The game arrived pretty much on time, but the developers *should* have held it back—not just in the interests of good taste, but to fix the annoying gameplay flaws of an otherwise-promising RTS.

WW3 proposes a near-future war among the U.S., Russia, and Iraq for the oil resources of the Middle East. Each side gets a pair of campaigns, played out on 3D terrain courtesy of the *Earth 2150* engine. The real-world units are limited to various models of armor and helicopters, plus specialty units like engineers and minelayers. Ships, fixed-wing aircraft, and infantry units are MIA, but we do get missiles loaded with chemical weapons, truck bombs, and tactical nukes. Given the current situation, this is frankly in appalling taste.

At first, the game looks and feels appealing, with a modest but effective tech tree and intricate maps, including underground levels. Although missions are complex, you must play them the way the developer wants you to play them. Despite unit design, landscape, and mission goals that offer some real opportunities for tactical interest, gamers are often funneled along narrow puzzle-like pathways to victory. Each mission becomes a cipher to be cracked rather than a dynamic battlefield.



The Bad Taste Award goes to Reality Pump, for this charming moment in which a terrorist bomber takes out an American base while screaming "Jihad!"

The tank rush is so 1999, particularly when you fudge the numbers to give the enemy AI a boost.

Unit AI is another real problem. Even when you give units orders to hold their position, they regularly rush right at the enemy to fight it out nose-to-nose. This is maddening with ranged weapons like mortars and long-range tanks. Part of the problem is an interface that uses the same mouse button to attack and to move, meaning that a wrong click can easily issue a fatal move order.

Finally, *WW3* is absurdly archaic in how it rewards tank-rush techniques. The only path to victory often involves churning out a mass of units and then rushing. In several missions, I would get to an enemy base only to find it so crammed with units that not a single piece of ground was visible.

The maps, hardy editor, stable multiplayer, skirmish mode, and long campaign element don't counterbalance the flaws. With the RTS genre in a mini-renaissance, *WW3* doesn't measure up.

VERDICT ★★½☆☆

Rotten unit AI, puzzlelike missions, and bad taste undermine a promising RTS.

Takeda

Shogun lite—same taste, less thrilling By Tom Chick

PUBLISHER Xicat Interactive
DEVELOPER Magitech
URL www.ezgame.com/Takeda/home.html
ESRB RATING Teen; violence
PRICE $44.99

REQUIREMENTS Pentium II 200, 64MB RAM, 1GB hard drive space RECOMMENDED REQUIREMENTS None MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT LAN, Internet (2 players)

Canadian developer Magitech calls *Takeda* a battle simulator, which is a pretty accurate assessment of what you're getting in this modest real-time wargame set in feudal Japan. It shows almost zero interest in the bigger strategic picture (the linear, story-driven campaign is hardly interactive). Instead, the focus is on the mechanics of battle. Set up mixed divisions of cavalry, infantry, archers, and even early guns. Arrange them in formations, with nicely documented strengths and weaknesses. Then start the battle and see how they fare. It's a test bed for feudal warfare.

Unfortunately, it's not a very good test bed. The 2D graphics are slow, jerky, and eye-straiiningly tiny. It's almost impossible to distinguish different unit types from each other. There's not a lot of information onscreen. The right-click-happy interface has been arranged with all the important information buried down one level. The result is a game that makes you feel like a bystander instead of a general. But worst of all, *Takeda* feels superfluous.

Enemies at the gate or ants?

In a world without *Shogun*, this would be a decent wargame. Unfortunately, what little thunder *Takeda* may have had has long since been stolen.

VERDICT ★★☆☆☆

Gamers looking for a wargame set in feudal Japan should skip *Takeda* and pick up *Shogun* instead.

In a world without *Shogun*, *Takeda* would be a decent little wargame.

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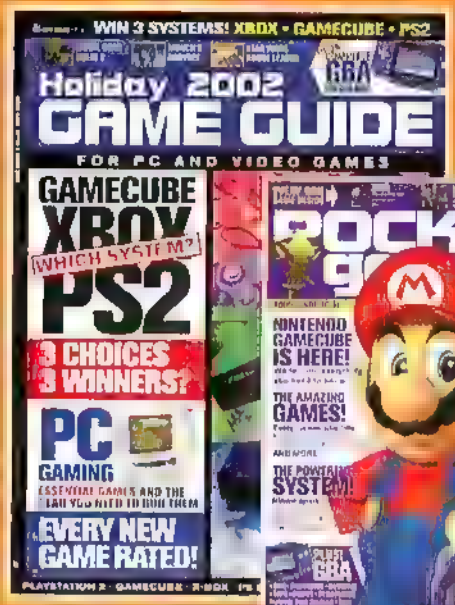

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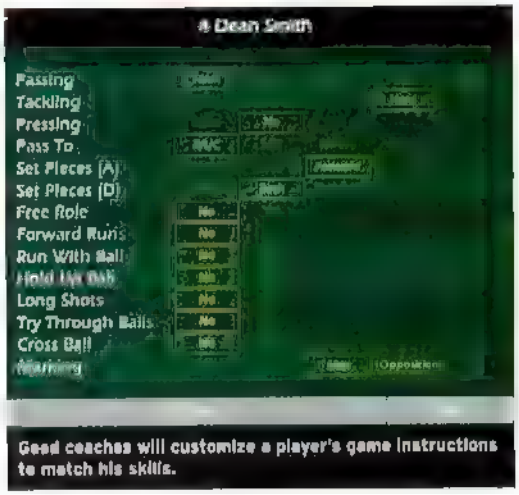
Your star player tells the press that you are the reason he's in a slump.

Giovanni wants £9 million, but your board of directors says "no way."



Good coaches will customize a player's game instructions to match his skills.

Championship Manager 01/02

You don't have to be a soccer fanatic to go crazy for this sports sim **By Jeff Lackey**

PUBLISHER: Eidos Interactive
DEVELOPER: Sports Interactive
URL: www.sigames.com
ESRB RATING: Everyone
PRICE: $29.50

REQUIREMENTS: Pentium 133, 16MB RAM, 500MB hard drive space
RECOMMENDED REQUIREMENTS: Pentium 233, 64MB RAM
MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT: LAN via TCP/IP (2-16 players)

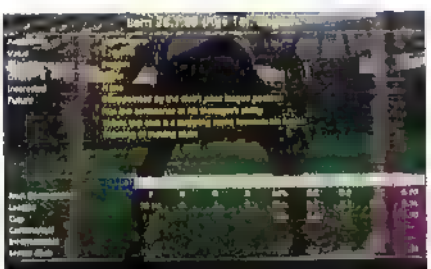
It's soccer. It's text. And it's one of the most addictive games you'll ever play.

Championship Manager 01/02 is one of the world's best-selling games, but if you live in the U.S., you may have never heard of it. And while a text based soccer management simulation may seem to most U.S. gamers as seductive as Rosie O'Donnell in a string bikini, this is a superb sports sim, an in depth strategy game, and a marvelous role-playing experience. Select your team out of the many national leagues (including the American MLS), and you'll be plunged into an exquisite world swirling with news, rumors, and deals; athletes who are by turns hopeful, spoiled, sullen loyal, and treacherous; boards of directors who hire and fire according to both performance and the reactions of the press and the fans; and much, much more. This role-playing universe is compelling and addictive. How do you respond to the press's criticism of a starting player who is struggling? What do you do with a young foreign player with superb skills but who's playing poorly because he's homesick? This is just the tip of the iceberg of the many situations you'll find yourself facing in *Championship Manager 01/02*.

In addition to the soap opera world of international soccer, there's a very deep strategic aspect to *Championship Manager 01/02*. Putting a team together is a never ending process of discovering and acquiring new talent (always in competition with your cutthroat managing peers), learning who on your team is a star and who is a dud, trying to retain your best players, keeping these temperamental athletes happy and productive, and more. While players' various attributes are displayed as numbers, hidden attributes mean that the only sure way to discern a player's value is to observe his on-field performance. Once on the field, you can select from a variety of pre-set team formations and tactics, although one of the more fascinating and satisfying facets of the game is creating your own tactics. Every imaginable tactical aspect can be customized, such as aggression level, passing style, pressing, tackling intensity, and more. You can also adjust team positioning, with and without the ball. The combinations are endless, and the success of your tactics will depend on the skills of your players and your opponents' skills and tactics. The actual matches are portrayed via a combination of text commentary and the audio chants, cheers, and jeers of the crowd. It's surprising just how nail-bitingly exciting a match can be with text commentary in *01/02*. It is done well enough that it actually provides a better mental picture of what's happening on the field than you get from most graphics-based sports sims.

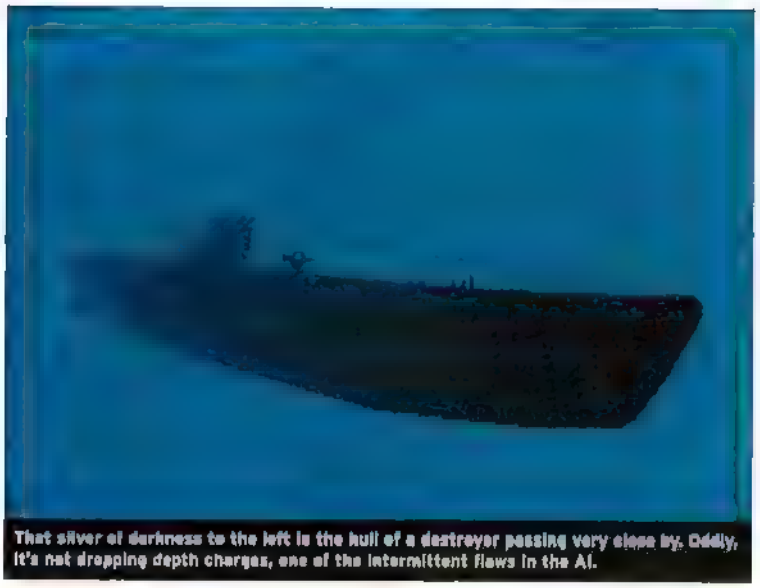
Championship Manager 01/02 is one of those addictive games that makes you decide to play "just a little bit longer" even though it's a quarter to three in the morning. Even if you're not a soccer fan, give it a shot—this is a great game.

Even if you're not a soccer fan, give it a shot—this is a great game.


Great. Your 16-year-old future superstar hates everything about your club.

VERDICT ★★★★½

A text-based sports management game that's as addictive as *Diablo II*.



That sliver of darkness to the left is the hull of a destroyer passing very close by. Oddly, it's not dropping depth charges, one of the intermittent flaws in the AI.

External views let you watch the action without exposing yourself to enemy fire by surfacing or using the periscope.

Silent Hunter II

After a long and difficult development, we finally have an heir to *Wolfpack* By Thomas L. McDonald

PUBLISHER Ubi Soft
DEVELOPER Ubi Motion
WEB www.silenthunterii.com
ESRB RATING Everyone
PRICE $47.95

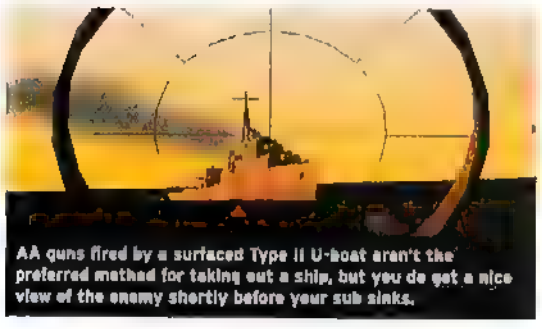
REQUIREMENTS Pentium II 266, 650MB hard drive space, DirectX-compatible graphics card, 8X CD-ROM drive
RECOMMENDED REQUIREMENTS Pentium III 450
MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT LAN via TCP/IP (2-16 players)

Silent Hunter II (SH2) doesn't stray too far from its roots, but it doesn't really need to. *Silent Hunter* was a defining classic of submarine simulation, and the sequel continues the tradition with a new look and some lingering problems.

It wasn't an easy trip out of the berth for *SH2*. The original *Silent Hunter* developer, Bill Becker's Aeon Entertainment, was sacked deep into development of *SH2*. Aeon was replaced by Ubi Motion (*Panzer Commander*), who worked on *Destroyer Command* in tandem with *SH2* to create a revolutionary linked multiplayer sub-versus-destroyer sim. With *Destroyer Command* delayed until next year, we'd have to wait to see how that major element comes together, because there's no multiplayer support in *SH2*.

Shifting the action from Americans in the Pacific to Germans in the Atlantic, Caribbean, Mediterranean, and Indian Ocean allows *SH2* to finally offer a dazzling array of 13 U-boat models and a fertile hunting ground. Sub sims combine tactical, map-based planning and maneuvering with the more visceral controls of a sim, complete with multiple ship stations, sensors, and weapons. This creates long lulls (eased in *SH2* thanks to a heavy-duty time compression feature) culminating in an attack and evasion.

Most of *SH2* takes place in the campaign game, with only eight generic stand-alone missions and a limited custom mission builder. Your captain works his way up the ranks of the German navy, getting better ships by successfully completing missions. There are about 60 campaign missions, and no single campaign is likely to generate every mission, which adds a level of replayability. Encounters range from specific historical scenarios to open-ended patrols with general requirements, such as sinking a certain amount of tonnage.



AA guns fired by a surfaced Type II U-boat aren't the preferred method for taking out a ship, but you do get a nice view of the enemy shortly before your sub sinks.

On the bridge, control will be familiar to anyone who played the original. Different stations—damage control, deck, bridge, torpedo room, and so on—feature detailed, functional equipment. Ubimation has added little pop-up windows that boil all the vital functions down to a small interface. Combined with copious hotkeys, this panel makes control far better than in the original, and eases the complex operation of attacking. The biggest overall change for *SH2* is visual (as expected): It now features detailed ship models, satisfying explosions, and striking water effects. The external views are particularly welcome—you don't exactly want to stick around at periscope depth after firing a spread of torpedoes, so you don't see much from the ship itself.

There are a few flaws (the most notable being an erratic AI. Sometimes warships attack with lethal precision, while other times they'll sail right by a surfaced U-boat firing its deck guns. This inconsistency manifests itself more in quick missions than the campaign.

Silent Hunter II features detailed ship models, satisfying explosions, and striking water effects.

The difficulty levels allow for a variety of approaches, from simple line 'em up and shoot-'em mayhem to total control for sub nuts who want to manually set gyro angles. Ubimation didn't change a lot from the original, but—with the exception of the erratic AI—everything they did was an improvement. Although *Silent Hunter II* can't be considered complete until the release of *Destroyer Command* and multiplayer support, what's here is very good indeed.

VERDICT ★★★★½

An updated and improved take on the classic sub sim.

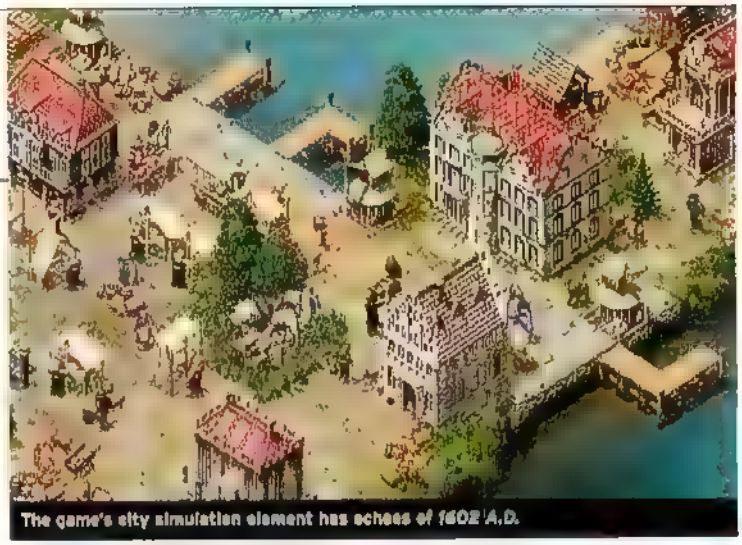
Patrician II

That's German for *micromanagement*

By Bruce Geryk

PUBLISHER Strategy First
DEVELOPER Ascaron Software
URL www.strategyfirst.com
ESRB RATING Everyone; violence
PRICE $45

REQUIREMENTS Pentium II 233, 32MB RAM, 300MB hard drive space
RECOMMENDED REQUIREMENTS Pentium II 450, 64MB RAM, 540MB hard drive space, 16MB 3D video card
MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT Internet, LAN, Hotseat (2-8 players)



The game's city simulation element has echoes of 1602 A.D.

Although *Patrician II* is actually the sequel to a game that was available only for the Amiga, PC gamers will be familiar with its style of gameplay from such releases as *Merchant Prince* and *Sid Meier's Pirates*. While *Patrician II* has neither the elegance of the former nor the open-ended scope of the latter, it has a depth few games of this genre can match. Fewer still can equal the level of micromanagement.

Patrician II starts you in the 14th century as a trader during the Hanseatic League's economic dominance of the Baltic and North Seas. You begin with a single ship and try to develop a trade empire and complete various objectives, from amassing a huge fortune to being elected president of the League. A significant sim element is built into the game, so that part of managing the demand for goods involves managing your populace. Different segments of society will have different demands, and developing more sophisticated tastes (and thus higher profit margins) requires careful city development. It's a robust sim for those willing to tackle its depth.

The range of play is excellent and makes the game compelling. Combat is done in an elegant, appealing style resembling a stripped-down *Age of Sail*; it's just one of several diverse elements that give the game substantial breadth.

Managing this breadth, however, is another story. *Patrician II* has the feel of an old-school economic sim in that you're constantly clicking through window after window to find the information you need. The game could have benefited greatly from a set of summary screens for things like demand for goods across the League.

A tool for flagging appealing price spreads would have been invaluable.

While the huge micromanagement load will probably be frustrating for many, those who make it through the game's steep learning curve will find their time has been well spent. At times you might feel like you need a break from the constant market analysis and city management, but that's probably how successful Hanseatic traders felt, too. It's just another simulation element that *Patrician II* gets right.

VERDICT ★★★½☆

Deep gameplay and good historical climate hampered by micromanagement and a clumsy interface.

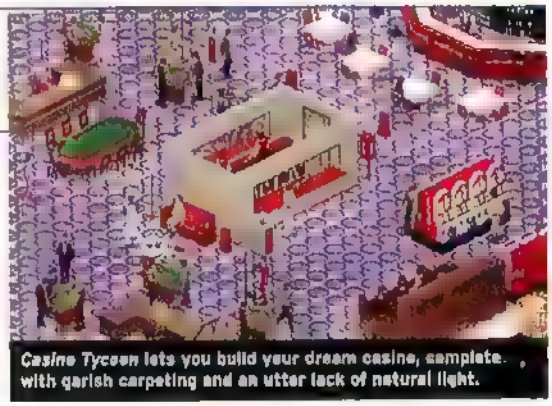
Casino Tycoon

Two lemons and a bar line

By John Fletcher

PUBLISHER Monte Cristo Games
DEVELOPER Cat Daddy Games
URL www.casino-tycoon.com
ESRB RATING Not rated
PRICE $19.99

REQUIREMENTS Pentium II 350, 64MB RAM, 350MB hard drive space
RECOMMENDED REQUIREMENTS Pentium III, 128MB RAM
MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT None



Casino Tycoon lets you build your dream casino, complete with garish carpeting and an utter lack of natural light.

Casino Tycoon sets out to prove the old adage "a fool and his money are easily parted." You'll suspect you're that fool if you purchase this disappointing game.

The object is to build the swankiest, most profitable joint on the strip. *Casino Tycoon* does display some strengths, a full selection of building items, nice 2D and 3D viewing options, and an intuitive game interface. Unfortunately, flaws soon disrupt the game, the worst offender being the incredibly sluggish engine that leaves you repeatedly clicking icons trying to slip a command into the routine. Poorly executed ideas compound the disenchantment. Patrons have heart attacks without so much as a mood indicator to show their distressed condition, but crafty professional thieves (allegedly spotted only via security cameras) are easily identified by their Hamburglar-inspired outfits. Finally, *Casino Tycoon* fails to let you play any of the games within the casino, something that would have helped during the stretches when you're waiting for enough cash to do the next upgrade.

It's not that *Casino Tycoon* is a horrible game; it's just underdeveloped. A little more effort and it could have come up sevens instead of craps.

VERDICT ★★☆☆☆

Half-baked development makes *Casino Tycoon* a very bad bet.

A little more effort and *Casino Tycoon* could have come up sevens instead of craps.

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A little fantasy and sci-fi peppers the game. In the early epochs, your prophet can cast calamities like this earthquake.

Empire Earth

Age after age after age of empires By Elliott Chin

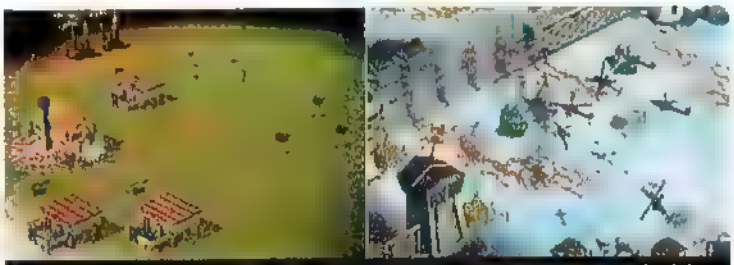
PUBLISHER Sierra Studios
DEVELOPER Stainless Steel Studios URL www.empireearth.com
ESRB RATING Teen; blood, violence PRICE $49.95

REQUIREMENTS Pentium II 350, 64MB RAM, 550MB hard drive space RECOMMENDED REQUIREMENTS Pentium III, 128MB RAM MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT LAN, Internet (2-8 players)

Empire Earth shares many qualities with its spiritual predecessor, *Age of Empires*. Both games have ages (in *Empire Earth* they're called epochs). Both games have the same types of resources and the same look. The units, game mechanics, and unit relationships during the first few epochs are also practically identical to the early ages in *Age of Kings*. Not surprising, considering that Stainless Steel Studios founder Rick Goodman was lead designer on the original *Age*. So is *Empire Earth* fated to spend its life in *Age*'s considerable shadow? The answer is no, if only because *Empire Earth*'s kitchen sink design is too massive (if at times unwieldy) to be darkened by the shadows cast by a dozen games.

Breaking Free

Empire Earth, unlike *Age*, has 14 epochs, sprawling from the prehistoric to the nanotechnology age. *Empire Earth* further distinguishes itself by adding a little fantasy and science fiction to the mix with early units that can summon volcanoes and plagues, and late units that can teleport and warp time. The game has eight Wonders, but unlike the wonders in *Age*, they actually do something. The Temple of Zeus, for example, gives all of your units regeneration ability.



At first glance, *Empire Earth* looks like a carbon copy of *Age of Empires*, but play into the middle and late game and you'll find much more rewarding helicopters and tanks.

There are four campaigns: ancient Greece, medieval Britain, World War I and World War II Germany, and a future Russia. The campaign scenarios are very tough and lengthy. Just when you think you're done, the game usually gives you another objective, and then follows it with yet another one. The never-ending objectives and the sheer difficulty of the level design often result in scenarios that drag on for too long.

Wonders aren't just for show; they also give you in-game benefits. The Pharos Lighthouse lifts fog-of-war over the oceans.

Although every unit has a counterunit, your Tank-versus-House matches are generally lopsided in favor of the tanks.

Empire Earth's glut of stuff is the game's greatest strength as well as its undoing.

Empire Earth's 14 epochs are great in theory (lots of gameplay), but in practice, they make for very long games. Playing a game from the prehistoric age to the final age takes at least a few hours, too long for a multiplayer game or skirmish mode. Stainless Steel acknowledges this by including a tournament multiplayer mode that quickens the pace of multiplayer games by making age advancement cheaper and quickening worker speed.

Empire Earth comes with 21 civilizations, but it also lets you select civ bonuses from a massive list so you can create custom civilizations. The game also models limited unit morale and lets you populate resource centers with citizens for future economic bonuses. Unfortunately, the game never adequately quantifies the morale or populating bonuses, except to say that they make you harder to kill and improve your resource gathering, respectively.

Late Bloomer

In a way, the glut of stuff is both *Empire Earth*'s greatest strength and its undoing. Frankly, the game should have just started at the Middle Ages and run from there, because as it is, it takes too long to get to the good parts. When you hit the Renaissance Age, *Empire Earth* acquires its own identity, and the game turns out to be genuinely fun. There are so many new units in these later epochs, and their firepower ramps up spectacularly. You move from rifles to machine guns to pounding howitzers to nuclear bombs. And each new unit is well balanced and fun to watch. There's something exciting about sending a wave of B-52 bombers into an enemy base, and watching the entire camp disappear behind a wall of white light and mushroom clouds. Compared with that, a catapract just isn't that impressive anymore.

Stainless Steel Studios really forces the concept of counterunits on players. Each unit is specialized to kill one other unit with supreme efficiency but is also highly vulnerable to a counterunit of its own. Units are so specialized that you really have to micromanage them to make sure they attack their intended targets instead of letting the AI just attack at random. The differentiation between units is even more pronounced than that in *Age of Kings* or *StarCraft*, especially when you get to the modern-day and futuristic units.

If you neglect the game's intricate unit relationships and instead opt to throw a batch of units at the enemy, you'll be slaughtered. This is not a game for beginners or lax strategy gamers. But complexity is good, as it adds depth and options and eliminates any obvious superunits. However, when games get this complex, it's almost a chore to master them. *Empire Earth* really demands your full attention.

Empire Earth is by no means revolutionary, and it suffers from a few annoying flaws, like its drawn-out scenarios and poor pacing. Although it starts out like an *Age of Empires* clone, it distinguishes itself admirably in the later stages of the game with a great variety of units and gameplay that is both fun and sophisticated. It might be frustrating and demanding at times, but if you have patience and love a challenge, *Empire Earth* can offer a very rewarding experience.

The early epochs simply aren't as fun as the later ages because they have a "been there, done that" feel to them.

The firepower at your disposal in the late game is devastating.

VERDICT ★★★½☆

Empire Earth **is long and will try your patience, but it's also a fun challenge for those who like the genre.**

F1 2001's external cameras offer TV-quality perspectives during and after a race.

Even moderate collisions prompt *F1 2001* cars to shed their tires and wings and kick up a whole lotta smoke.

It doesn't take much to lose control of an *F1 2001* car, especially in the corner-mad world of Monaco.

F1 2001

The leader of the pack **By Gord Goble**

PUBLISHER EA Sports
DEVELOPER Image Space Incorporated
URL www.easports.com
ESRB RATING Everyone
PRICE $29.95

REQUIREMENTS Windows XP/ME/2000/98, Pentium II 333, 64MB RAM, 250MB hard drive space, 12X CD-ROM drive, 16MB Direct3D-capable video card
RECOMMENDED REQUIREMENTS Pentium III 500 or AMD Athlon processor, 128MB RAM, 1GB hard drive space, 32MB Direct3D-capable video card
MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT Internet (2-4 players), LAN (2-8 players)

Arguments may rage over the relative merits of Geoff Crammond's *Grand Prix* series and EA Sports' *F1* franchises, yet one thing is becoming increasingly clear in this battle between PC Formula 1 heavyweights. When EA Sports releases a new *F1* installment—which it seems to do every nine months or so—potential customers should extensively research its originality and worthiness before buying. Although the latest in the series, *F1 2001*, offers several enhancements and authentic 2001 cars and tracks, it feels a bit rushed and often refuses to deliver top-level performance, even on recommended equipment.

As is typical for the EA Sports stable, *F1 2001* is a true chameleon. First-time racers can take advantage of its abundant driving aids and successfully but slowly navigate any and all of the 17 real-life 2001 circuits. Experienced arcade drivers may enroll in the game's expanded Driving School component, where they'll learn just how terrifyingly fast and twitchy an unaided *F1 2001* car is compared to those of the *Need for Speed* variety. Hardened pros can eliminate all the aids, tune their machines beforehand in the massive garage, and experience a ride as challenging as that of *Grand Prix 3*. Those who elect to switch off the most critical of those aids, Steering Assistance, will be forced to adjust controller sensitivity and dead zones just to make the car drivable.

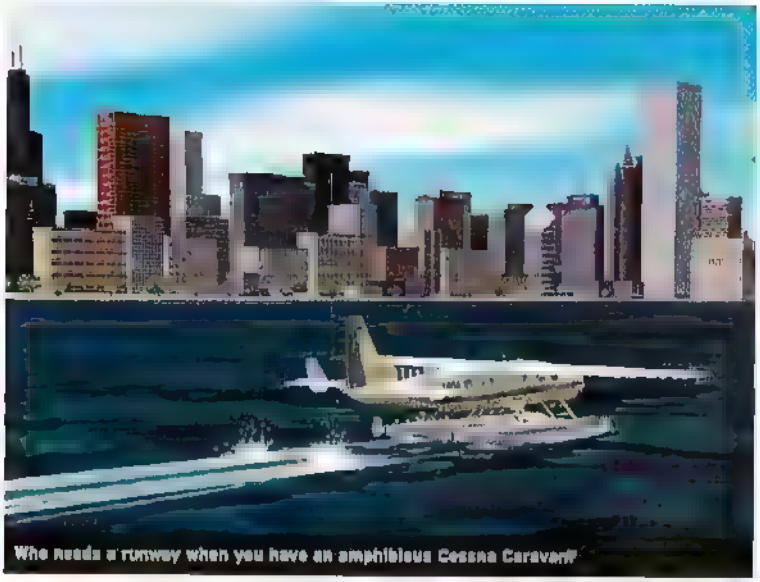
Once set up, however, *F1 2001* is an awesome spectacle. Returning developer Image Space Incorporated has revamped the already superb physics model to replicate more faithfully the rear-wheel drive, four-point stance, and continuously tenuous grip of a real F1 thoroughbred. It has improved the AI driver collision-avoidance routines, added animated pit crews and variable midrace weather, and enhanced the game's crash effects and detection. And like its predecessor, *F1 2001* continues to be one of the few racing titles to offer such perks as separate accelerator and brake axes and plausible rough pavement and raised curbing response.

Yet several problems remain. Desirable features such as force-feedback support, dedicated multiplayer online racing and matchmaking, and a true career mode have once again been neglected. AI cars remain extremely fragile in crash situations and often oblivious to wet weather. And despite a greater level of cockpit, vehicle, and general visual detail than ever before, players will need cutting-edge equipment and just the right configuration in order to experience *F1 2001*'s undeniably awesome graphic potential. If testing and fan site feedback are any indication, the game is currently having compatibility hassles with a variety of video cards and software drivers, primarily those based on Nvidia's GeForce2 chipset. Also, it doesn't support resolutions of 1024x768 or 4X antialias smoothing unless you meet some steep system parameters. A patch should be released by the time you read this.

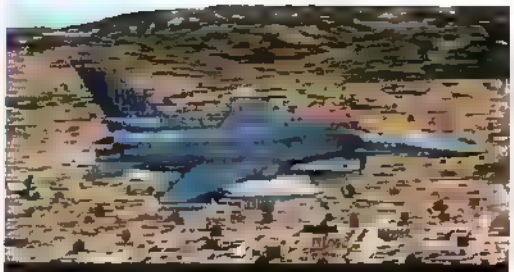
With superb physics, killer graphics, and an agreeable price point, *F1 2001* seems like a slam-dunk. And it is, but only if you're willing to face possible compatibility problems and aren't already an owner of its predecessor, *F1 2000 Championship Season*. Otherwise, you may want to wait for the inevitable *F1 2001½*.

VERDICT ★★★½☆

Coleader for the title of best F1 sim—but is that reason enough to upgrade?



Who needs a runway when you have an amphibious Cessna Caravan?



This *FS2000* freeware F-16 works perfectly in *FS2002*; note the AutoGen scenery below.

The 747-400 is one of the planes featuring a 3D virtual cockpit with working instruments.

Flight Simulator 2002

The whole world, in your PC By Denny Atkin

PUBLISHER Microsoft
DEVELOPER Microsoft
URL www.microsoft.com
ESRB RATING Everyone
PRICE $49.99 (standard), $69.99 (pro)

REQUIREMENTS Pentium II 300, 64MB RAM, 3D video card, 750MB hard drive space, Windows 98/ME/2000/XP RECOMMENDED REQUIREMENTS Pentium III 450, 128MB RAM, 16MB 3D card, 1GB hard drive space, joystick MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT Internet Gaming Zone

Straight to the point: *Microsoft Flight Simulator 2002* is the most impressive civilian sim ever. The difference isn't in the aircraft—they're only incrementally improved from *FS2000*—but rather in the world they fly in. Microsoft has created a detailed 3D replica of the Earth's entire freaking surface. And now there are plenty of other planes sharing the skies with you.

The most striking improvement in *FS2002* is the new terrain engine. Now peaks such as Washington's Mt. Rainier, California's Mt. Diablo, and Vermont's Camelback are immediately recognizable. Better terrain textures help as well, but the biggest improvement is in city rendering. The new AutoGen scenery populates cities and towns with random buildings and trees, giving populated areas a much more realistic look. Combine this with dramatically improved special effects—including clouds, haze, and jet contrails—and you get amazingly realistic visuals. Also amazingly, the frame rates are better than what we saw in the less-detailed *FS2000*.

The "you are there" feeling is further enhanced by the addition of air traffic control and other aircraft in the skies. Earlier versions of the sim sported dynamic "scenery aircraft"—dumb planes that were just moving eye candy. Now planes taxi from the gates, take off, and fly real flight paths, all the while talking to air traffic control. If you file an instrument flight plan, interactive ATC will guide you through your route. The ATC is handled very realistically, but only when you're flying your assigned flight path—you can't change your flight plan en route or declare an emergency.

The standard edition of *FS2002* includes 12 flyable planes; the professional edition has 16 aircraft, turboprop modeling, and additional features such as a 3D aircraft editor. The improved flight models aren't as twitchy as before, and the sim now supports floatplanes and water landings.

Amazingly, the frame rates are better than the less-detailed *FS2000*'s.

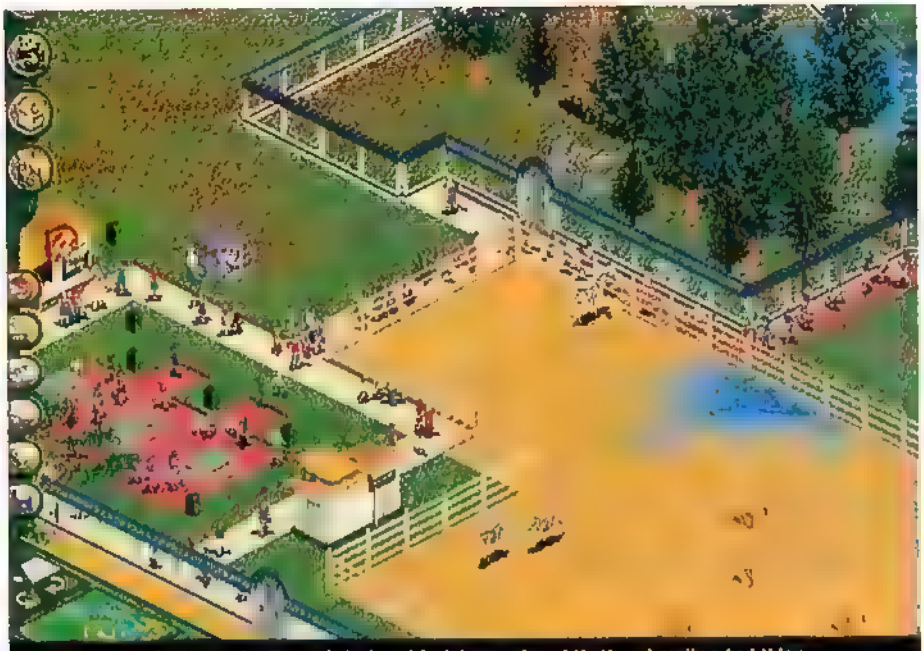
The newer planes boast detailed 3D virtual cockpits with working instrumentation, but these were omitted from many of the returning aircraft. The Concorde from *FS2000* is AWOL, but converted versions are available for download on many Websites. *FS2002* works with most add-on *FS2000* aircraft, so thousands of downloadable planes are available. Many scenery, weather, and adventure add-ons will need upgrades, however.

Despite the nitpicks, *FS2002* is an amazing achievement—virtual pilots worldwide can fly from local airports and feel right at home. Folks looking for gameplay may wonder what the fuss is about, but wannabe pilots and gamers who get why you'd want to sightsee over a virtual world will be in simulation heaven.

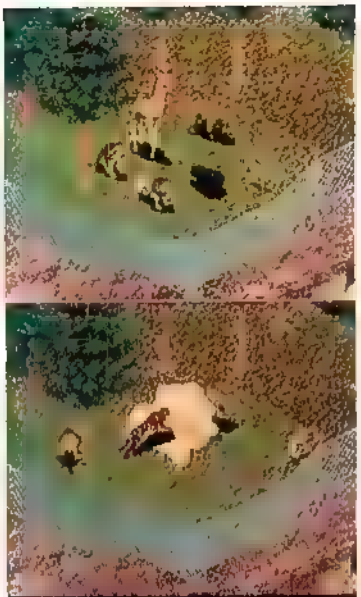
Clouds and haze look like the real stuff.

VERDICT ★★★★½

Best noncombat flight sim ever.



Zoo Tycoon has *Rollercoaster Tycoon*'s look and feel down pat, and that's not really a bad thing.



On top, we have today's deathmatch contestants. Below, see that the giraffe, now a cloud of smoke, has lost.

Zoo Tycoon

An animal prison sim for the whole family! By Jeff Green

PUBLISHER Microsoft
DEVELOPER Blue Fang Games WEB www.zootycoon.com
ESRB RATING Everyone; mild violence PRICE $34.95

REQUIREMENTS Pentium 233, 32MB RAM for Windows 95/98, 64MB RAM for Windows 2000, 128MB RAM for Windows XP, 250MB hard drive space
RECOMMENDED REQUIREMENTS 600MB hard drive space
MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT None

Since everybody and their grandma has decided to make a Tycoon game this year, it's no big surprise to see Microsoft—the company that must have a piece of every pie-jump on the bandwagon too. But with *Zoo Tycoon*, they've actually succeeded better than most in coming up with a title that's as accessible and fun as *Rollercoaster Tycoon*, the game that started this whole dumb trend.

Zoo Tycoon plays it smart and a little too safe by mimicking the *Rollercoaster Tycoon* formula to the letter, just substituting a zoo environment for an amusement park. The basic goal, whether you play in freeform mode or in one of the game's 13 scenarios, is to design and manage a zoo, balancing the goals of expansion and profit with the responsibilities of keeping employees, patrons, and animals happy.

Designing your zoo is mostly easy and intuitive, and anyone familiar with games like *Rollercoaster Tycoon* or *The Sims* should barely have to touch the manual. The interface is very friendly, with multiple ways to navigate and get feedback on animals and exhibits. In the freeform mode, you're given lots of cash to start, and there's an extremely forgiving Undo command—both come as a huge relief because so much of your work, especially early on, will be trial and error as you figure out each animal's ideal habitat. The designers obviously went to great lengths to keep things simple for younger gamers, without dumbing down gameplay for the adults.

But there are problems. The game's isometric perspective is in desperate need of another level of zoom. There are only two view levels, and they're both fairly distant. This makes it not only hard to find animals or workers in a crowded zoo, but also, frankly, less fun to watch. The animals are nicely animated, but they're far too tiny.

Where are the catastrophes? The animal thefts? The rain?

Second, some of the designing tasks—like finding and placing the proper flora and terrain for your animals—verge on utter tediousness, especially because the animals are so unforgiving about it. My 7-year-old and I were bogged down for 20 minutes seeking the *one tile* of sand that was dragging down our lion's happiness rating and it's a toss-up who had the bigger tantrum about it.

The game could also use more spontaneity and playfulness, more random events to jazz things up and catch you off guard. Where are the catastrophes? The animal thefts? The rain? One of the stealth pleasures of both *The Sims* and *Rollercoaster Tycoon* was the ability to indulge your darker side, but *Zoo Tycoon* keeps things a little too conservative. After you've deliberately opened the bear cages to watch some poor kid get swatted around or thrown an anteater into a lion's den you've pretty much done it all. Some of the game's random maps look like they might offer some weird sparks—but creating a zoo on Mars ends up being just like creating the same old zoo on some reddish tiles. Where are the Martians and the giant three-eyed sloths?

Still, *Zoo Tycoon* is nicely done overall—it's the rare family game that doesn't bore parents to death. And a good Website, with free new scenarios and items, ensures that the game will have a long life. Let's just hope the designers give us more of a wild kingdom next time around.

VERDICT ★★★½☆

It won't make you wet yourself, but it's a good, solid strategy sim that you can play with your kid.

4X4 Evo 2

Offroad fun without all that pesky realism By Tom Price

PUBLISHER GodGames
DEVELOPER Terminal Reality
URL www.4x4evolution.com
ESRB RATING Everyone
PRICE $44.99

REQUIREMENTS Pentium III 450, 128MB RAM, 32MB 3D accelerator, 1.2GB hard drive space
RECOMMENDED REQUIREMENTS Pentium III 1GHz, 256MB RAM, 64MB 3D card, 1.5GB hard drive space
MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT LAN, Internet (2-8 players)

I can't figure out why they keep releasing the *Evo* games for PC. Sure, the games are probably a lot of fun to romp around on the Xbox or PS2 sitting in the living room eating Cheetos and drinking beer. But considering the lack of realism and the repetitiousness of gameplay, I can't imagine computer gamers getting into it.

4X4 Evo 2's shortcomings do not stem from a lack of content. There are more trucks, more game modes, more racing circuits, more upgrades, more tracks, more everything than in the previous installment, yet somehow it seems like so little. At least half of the tracks were in the first game and are almost completely unchanged except for some new animated junk. And the extra racing modes don't offer much excitement either. The most promising is the Missions mode, in which you simply have an open area to drive around and meet various objectives. Unfortunately, this involves nothing more than reading a map, finding the objectives, and driving to them one at a time. There's never any competition to this other than the occasional timer (an AI opponent could have added a cool dimension), and it becomes nothing more than a rote map-reading exercise. They should have called it *4X4 Orienteering*.

One of the new and interesting locales is the Mediterranean, but by the ruins and statuary we assume they mean Greece.

That's why car manufacturers put their make and model in big letters on the back. So gamers could read them!

As for the driving itself, it's fun for the first hour or so. But once you've bounced 30 yards in the opposite direction after running into a three-month-old discarded Christmas tree that's smaller than your front axle, or gotten hopelessly stuck on a rock that protrudes approximately three inches from the ground, you'll be ready to book these developers into a physics class. The game is meant to be fun, but maybe we could tolerate the silly physics if the game were more intentionally silly. There's nothing silly about doing five laps around a junkyard against unbeatable opponents, especially when plywood signs held up by 2-by-4s are as unyielding as a Winnebago-size boulder.

4X4 Evo 2 isn't a complete waste of time, but it occasionally feels like it. You *could* spend hours earning digital dollars to unlock one of the $500,000 super-trucks, but it doesn't make the game any more fun. And you're out $500,000.

VERDICT ★★☆☆☆

It will train you how to drive a 4x4 on the moon well.

The Weakest Link

Anne Robinson comes to a PC near you By Dana Jongewaard

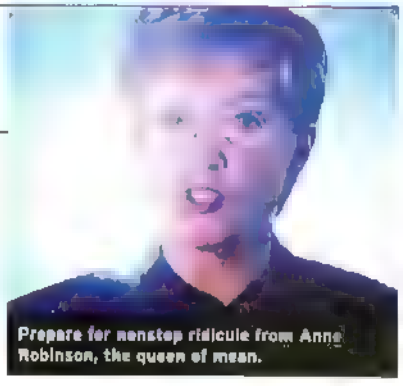
PUBLISHER BBC
DEVELOPER Activision
URL www.activision.com
ESRB RATING Everyone
PRICE $19.99

REQUIREMENTS Pentium 200, 32MB RAM, 130MB hard drive space
RECOMMENDED REQUIREMENTS None
MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT Hotseat only (2-7 players)

Here's a lesson on what *not* to do in business. Take a television game show with limited appeal, wait until its ratings drop, and then release a computer game based on it. Which is what the BBC did—it's not a coincidence that Britain isn't the leading economic power.

The Weakest Link PC game is patterned directly after the television show. Choose from any of 24 characters and then answer trivia questions in an attempt to best the other six contestants in a series of elimination rounds. You can adjust the difficulty level of questions, the number of questions from each category, who is allowed to bank money and when, and the amount of abuse heaped on contestants who answer incorrectly.

The Weakest Link's downfall is that it tries to be exactly like the television show. Portions of the show that can be mildly amusing, such as the elimination process, quickly grow annoying in the computer version of the game after you're forced to watch the same characters repeat the same lines ad nauseum. The animation is jerky and poorly done—contestants look like they've escaped from a bad Cubist painting. And if you find Anne Robinson annoying on TV, triple that irritation factor for the PC game.

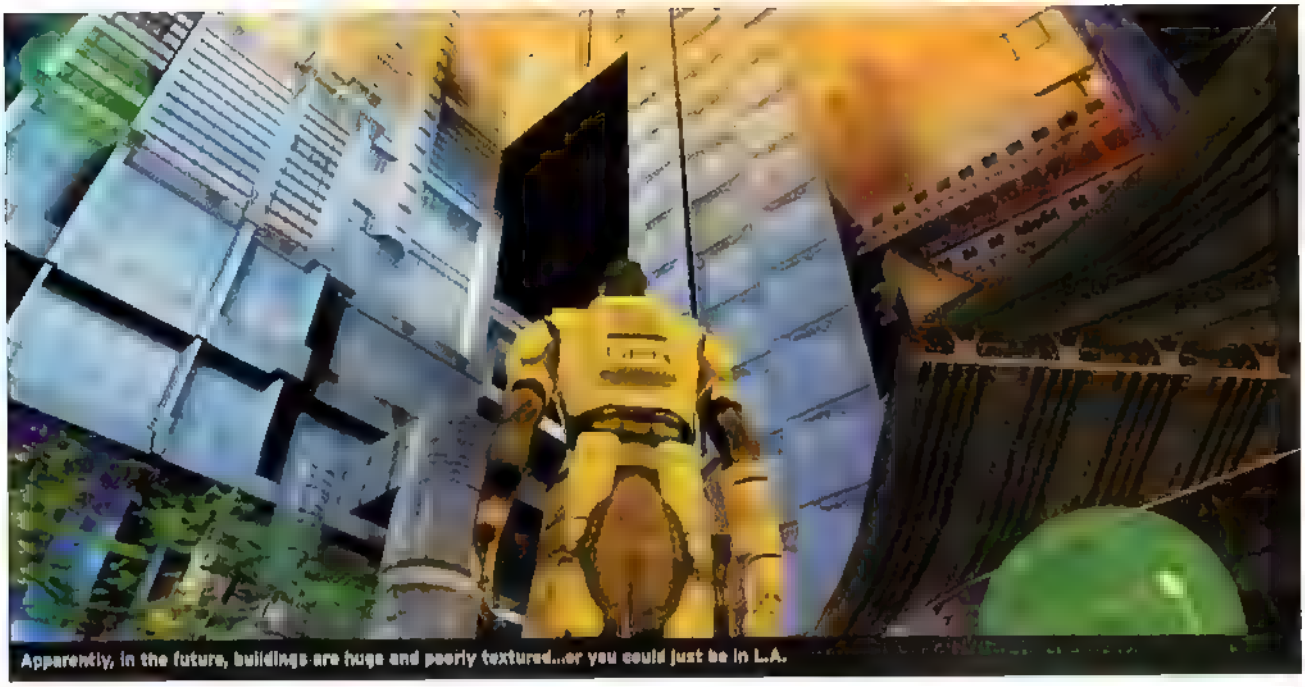

Prepare for nonstop ridicule from Anne Robinson, the queen of mean.

If it's trivia you're after, read questions from *Trivial Pursuit* cards. Or pick up an *Encyclopedia Britannica*. Don't, however, buy this game.

VERDICT ★☆☆☆☆

If you like snail's-pace trivia games with irritating characters, then this is made for you.

If you find Anne Robinson annoying on TV, triple that irritation factor for the PC game.



Apparently, in the future, buildings are huge and poorly textured...or you could just be in L.A.

Project Eden

This console port isn't the paradise it wanted to be By Jason Babler

PUBLISHER Eidos Interactive
DEVELOPER Core Design Ltd.
WEB www.eidosinteractive.com ESRB RATING Teen
PRICE $39.99

REQUIRED MINIMUM Pentium III 300, 64MB RAM, 10MB hard drive space
RECOMMENDED REQUIREMENTS Pentium III 600, 256MB RAM MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT LAN (2-4 players)

To be terrible is to be immortal. That's the only way one can explain all the bad stuff that keeps coming back as though no one noticed how terrible it was in the first place. Eidos' strain of ever-returning terror manifests itself as the *Daikatana* curse: games with noble intentions undone by bad design.

I could have disregarded the shortcomings of *Project Eden* if the developers had done one thing right: make the team AI work. Your team can't cross a bridge behind you without falling to their deaths. How can they publish a game that has this as its foundation? Poor team AI crippled *Daikatana*; hasn't anyone learned this lesson?

Project Eden seems promising. It builds a futuristic exploit around four team members that you can control at any time; it has environmental puzzles and sprinkles combat throughout. Throw in entertaining features such as control of ground- and air-based remote drones or the ability to hack into guns and cameras, and you've got a fun game, right? *Project Eden* has it all, but gets most of it wrong.

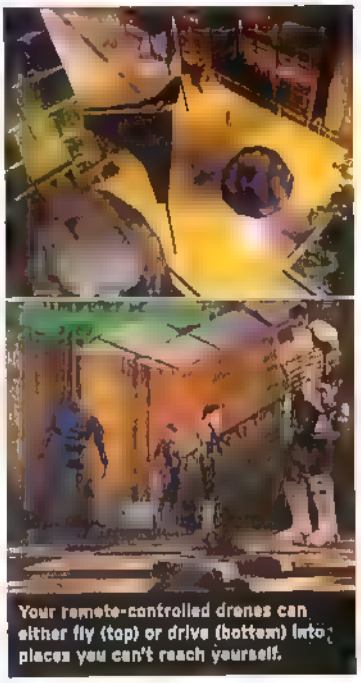
Here's an example of the exhausting, repetitious gameplay: Lead the massive cyborg, Amber, into a fire to turn on the sprinkler system. Go back. Lead Andre through the same path to fix a control panel. Go back. Lead Minoko through the same path to hack into the terminal Andre just fixed. Go back. Lead Carter through the same path to interview a person behind that door. As the levels become larger, so does your urge to uninstall.

Just as bad are pathfinding—it can take five minutes just to enter or exit an elevator—and combat AI (at times, your teammates inflict less damage). The interface sometimes has you accidentally switching teammates instead of firing at an enemy, and it's so picky with placement that you can't issue commands or activate items if you're not facing exactly the right direction. You can't jump, crouch, or dodge in this game, but you'll have no problem getting pissed off.

You can't jump, crouch, or dodge, but you'll have no problem getting pissed off.

An inconsistent gameworld translates into things like glass doors that either can be broken or take a half hour to generate a scripted explosion. Some puzzles are cut-and-pasted from other games: Haven't "swinging bridges," "dodge the big fan in the air duct," and "shoot the chain" been done to death? Did all the creative designers go to the console industry?

Add in clipping problems—which caused me to die by being stuck under stairs—bad voice acting, and a hokey storyline, and it looks like this game should have been named *The Projects*



Your remote-controlled drones can either fly (top) or drive (bottom) into places you can't reach yourself.

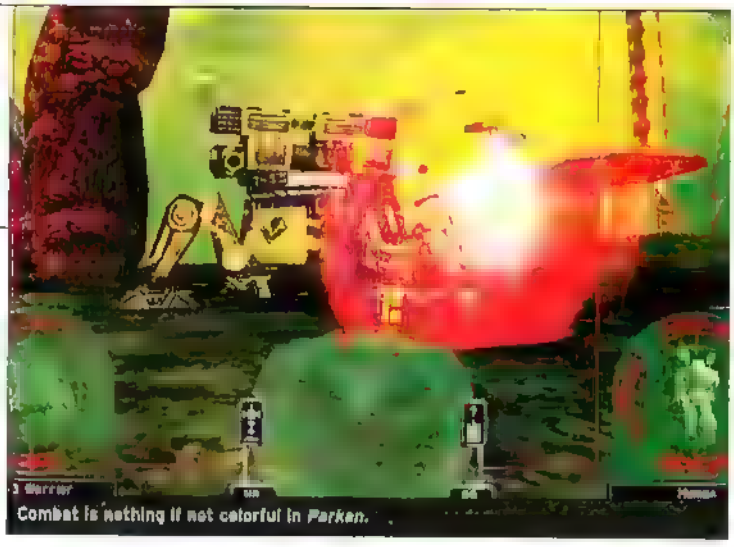
VERDICT ★☆☆☆☆

The potential was here but was squandered by inconsistency and poor execution in all facets of gameplay.

Parkan: Iron Strategy

Good things come in giant, bullet-spitting, iron packages

By Raphael Liberatore


Combat is nothing if not colorful in *Parkan*.

PUBLISHER Monte Cristo
DEVELOPER Nikita
www.ironstrategy.com
ESRB RATING Teen, violence
PRICE $39.99

REQUIREMENTS Pentium II, 64MB RAM, 200MB hard drive space
RECOMMENDED REQUIREMENTS Pentium III or AMD Athlon, 128MB RAM
MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT LAN, Internet, GameSpy (2-4 players)

Parkan, Iron Strategy completely surprised me. I went into this game thinking this was a battlemech wannabe, and so I expected a dud, or something much, much worse, especially because the storyline about alien invaders, rebel leaders, and neutral warbots has been done to death. But after playing a few missions, I had to admit the unthinkable—*Parkan* is one of the better giant-robot-war platform games I've played since *MechWarrior 2*.

Parkan, Iron Strategy offers a pleasant mix of RTS base building and missile-slinging 3D action in five campaigns and several add-on missions. There's plenty of combat mixed in with a gentle amount of hunting and gathering—enough to add another dimension to an already detailed game, but not so much that you're futzing over monstrous *Civilization*-type tech trees. In a nutshell, *Parkan* casts you as a leader of warbots hunting down ubiquitous enemy hordes, and then generating a motley force in order to defeat them. You can create and actually pilot a variety of warbots in battle, either in first or third person. Go toe-to-toe with enemy mechs and creatures or control your warbots from the safety of a command center. Lure the enemy toward your heavily fortified bunkers and watch them get blasted into the next light year. You can move fluidly from strategic to tactical combat in a pinch.

All aspects of mission control, including combat directives, are accessible in your warbot's Command Mode.

Part of *Parkan*'s charm lies in how it lets you build warbots and facilities to gain the upper hand. Resource gathering is crucial, but it's not a fussy endeavor. As a bonus, the ability to research objects adds versatility, and many of the advanced weapons, engines, and armor become useful later in the game.

The interface is simple, and in some ways, easier to master than *Battlezone*'s. Even the onboard computer log tells you how it's doing. The graphics are colorful, while terrain features, night, and weather effects really add to the overall intensity of combat. In the end, *Parkan: Iron Strategy* is a keeper, fusing the best of *Battlezone* and *MechWarrior 2* into a game with lasting appeal.

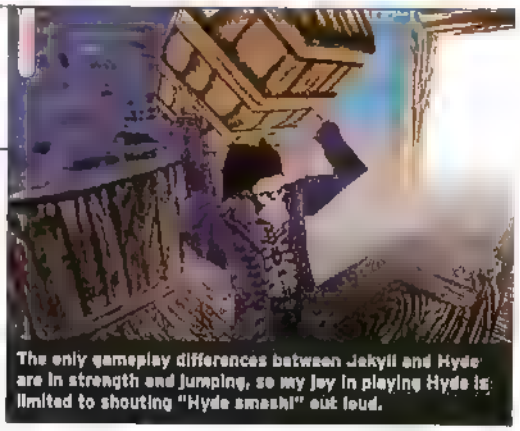
VERDICT ★★★★½

One of the better mech games in recent memory, *Parkan* does it all and does it well.

Jekyll & Hyde

This game should remain hydden from view

By Thierry Nguyen


The only gameplay differences between Jekyll and Hyde are in strength and jumping, so my joy in playing Hyde is limited to shouting "Hyde smash!" out loud.

PUBLISHER DreamCatcher Games (not DFS in Utero Game D-Vision URL www.dreamcatchergames.com/games/jekyll/jekyll.html
ESRB RATING Not rated
PRICE $19.99

REQUIREMENTS Pentium II 400, 64MB RAM, 100MB hard drive space
RECOMMENDED REQUIREMENTS Pentium II, 600, 128MB RAM, 700MB hard drive space
MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT None

I would have loved to hear the pitch line for this. Just to see if some corporate mucky-muck actually said, "Let's take Robert Louis Stevenson's classic work about Victorian psychology and turn it into a horrid platform game! We'll even throw in Dracula! It'll sell! Really!"

As if the idea of licensing a literature classic weren't wonky enough, latching said classic onto this mediocre (at best) platform game was an even worse idea. The art direction can best be described as a noble yet failed attempt at channeling Edward Gorey. "Fluid" and "precise" are exactly what the controls aren't. The camera is also slow and unwieldy, making jumps and combat all the more difficult. The save-game function is a fraud, resembling save anywhere but in reality amounting only to save checkpoints like you'd find in any console platformer. Turning into Hyde translates into better jumping (the puzzles themselves are still bad) and being stronger, but that's it. The storyline itself barely uses the source material, conjuring up details such as a wife and daughter that were never in the original work. On top of that, I couldn't play this after upgrading to Windows XP, as the keyboard simply stopped working, preventing me from using the wretched save system.

This game is full of bad ideas that make a mockery of good reading material. What's next? A first person shooter featuring Leopold Bloom squaring off against Humbert Humbert? Ugh.

VERDICT ★☆☆☆☆

A piss-poor platform game that tarnishes a Victorian classic.

It looks the same, but beneath the surface...

Kohan: Ahriman's Gift

A sparkling real-time hero with a noble turn-based heart By Tom Price

PUBLISHER: Strategy First
DEVELOPER: Timegate Studios
WEB: www.strategyfirst.com
ESRB RATING: Everyone; violence
PRICE: $39.95

REQUIRED: Pentium II 300, 64MB RAM, 400MB install
RECOMMENDED REQUIREMENTS: None
MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT: LAN, Internet (2-8 players)

It's hard to put a category label on *Kohan: Ahriman's Gift*. Is it an expansion pack, a stand-alone prequel, a series episode? It fits the basic definition of an expansion by using the same game engine and adding some new features and units to expand gameplay, but the sheer volume of new gameplay here would suggest that it is an entirely new game. What we do know is that we're lucky enough to be blessed with two *Kohan* games in one calendar year that both deliver some of the best RTS action we've seen in a while.

First, however, let me make a disclaimer. If you didn't enjoy the first *Kohan*, then you won't like this one. And if you didn't play the first *Kohan*, you should before you even consider tackling *Ahriman's Gift*. It assumes you have played the previous game and throws you directly into the kind of action you encountered at least midway through *Kohan*. *Ahriman's Gift* can be extremely challenging at times, but the continually clever (if somewhat scripted) AI never lets the game become repetitious.

But *Kohan* fans already know that. They also know how clever and elegant the overall design of the game can be. That old tenet about good games being easy to learn and difficult to master is followed to a T by the makers of *Kohan* which is superficially simple but continues to unveil strategic layers as you go. New units like the Maelstrom Engine as well as the new snow terrains bring welcome strategic intricacies to the mix.

Another thing *Kohan* fans will like is the prequel storyline. The various campaigns help fill in the backstory of Khaldun and should get diehard fans into such a mythos-building frenzy that it's only a matter of time before we see fan fiction involving Roxanna and Darius in some bizarre three-way with a Storm Lord.

Kohan: Ahriman's Gift is as much of a success as its predecessor, *Immortal Sovereigns*—it might even be better. If you're already hooked on *Kohan*, then *Ahriman's Gift* will give you your fix, maybe earlier than you were expecting.

For strategy tips on Kohan: Ahriman's Gift, go to page 132

Snow is a significant force, affecting movement and battle.

VERDICT ★★★★☆

***Kohan* continues to please with round two of the beginning of a beautiful gaming friendship.**

GAME PATCHES

Revisionist History

CGW looks at patches

By Andrew Burwell

Anarchy Online

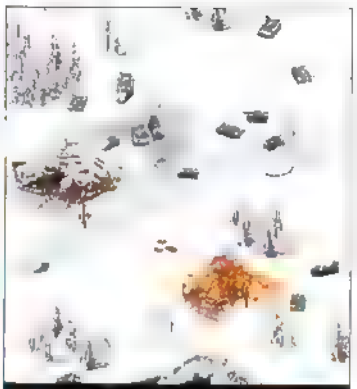
With the release of *Dark Age of Camelot* and the impending release of *Shadows of Lucilin*, we decided it was time to revisit *Anarchy Online*. Patching is up to version 13.0 as of this writing. So what's new? Lots.

The story began on Halloween, when unique elements including boss mobs were released into the world along with two new group-oriented dungeons for levels 30 to 40 and 70 to 80. Nano Techs, Martial Artists, and Fixers now kick major ass. All the other classes have also gotten minor updates and tweaks. The game is solid as a rock—no more crashing. Missions have been tweaked to make them more interesting, and trade skills are in full effect. If you bought AO and haven't played in a while, give it another chance. If you haven't tried it yet, pick up a copy or download the free seven-day trial from www.anarchy-online.com.

Pool of Radiance

Not surprisingly, Ubi Soft released a patch to deal with that pesky "kill your OS" problem in *Pool of Radiance: Ruins of Myth Drannor*. That's patch 1.1. To deal with the corrupted save-game problem that basically killed our reviewer's game, you'll need patch 1.2. Make sure you install both because the fixes in 1.2 don't include the brand new installer/uninstaller in 1.1. The most important thing you should do is patch the uninstaller so you can get the game the hell off your hard drive. Then find your receipt and return *PoR* for, oh, let's say *Civ III*—you know, a game that's actually fun.

Tanks fighting at a bottleneck—throw in a Tesla coil and you've got *Red Alert*.



A friendly base is overrun in this winter scenario.

At least the animated cut-scenes look pretty nice.

Real War

Oh, no it isn't, Mister

By John Fletcher

PUBLISHER Simon & Schuster
DEVELOPER Rival Interactive
URL www.real-war.com
ESRB RATING Teen; violence
PRICE $39.95

REQUIREMENTS Pentium II 333, 64MB RAM, 150MB hard drive space
RECOMMENDED Pentium II 500, 128MB RAM, 16MB 3D accelerator, 600MB hard drive space
MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT LAN, Internet (2-4 players)

Real War touts itself as being based "on the official Joint Chiefs of Staff training game developed for the U.S. military." If that's the case, God help us, because we're teaching our fighting men that we still use bazookas, that the SU-152 remains the standard Soviet bloc self-propelled artillery piece, and that the NATO-developed Eurofighter is actually an enemy weapons platform.

This disappointing game just can't seem to get it right. The basic premise is that the U.S. is being challenged by a fictional coalition of terrorist networks and rogue states known as the Independent Liberation Army. Despite the intriguing possibilities of this hypothesis, the designers chose to make the ILA a thinly veiled Soviet Union rehash, right down to the clichéd Russian voice-over accent in the mission briefings.

I felt like a cowhand trying to keep the herd moving in the same direction, rather than a general trying to rout out the evildoers.

The campaigns are a series of globe-hopping scenarios that tell the story of this conflict from each side. The poorly conceived ILA quickly hinders the scenarios. Instead of the quick strike, counterinsurgency, and seek-and-destroy operations one might expect from a game featuring an unconventional force, most scenarios are standard RTS "outbuild and overwhelm" missions in which you seek to bury the enemy in firepower before he does the same to you.

When it comes to controlling your assets, the game breaks down completely. Movement routines are so poorly written that units frequently wander all the way across the map when you've placed a waypoint directly in front of them. Sometimes I felt like a cowhand trying to keep the herd moving in the same direction, rather than a general trying to rout out the evildoers.

Don't expect anything better with combat: I experienced many instances when my units stood by passively while enemy forces blasted away undisturbed. One time I watched as friendly units assigned to protect a building refused to fire at nearby enemy troops because those enemies weren't firing at that specific friendly building.

Perhaps to compensate for these control problems, the game provides a Heads Up Display—but it only compounds the trouble. It's a good idea: Provide a central platform for finding units and issuing orders. But like almost everything else in *Real War*, it's poorly executed. Icons are too small and visually similar to be easily utilized, and the AI is so consistently unreliable that the HUD is unusable in anything but the smallest scenarios.

In fairness, *Real War* does some things well. The cut-scenes are exceptional, with excellent animations. The scenarios are crafted so every unit type gets its chance to shine. Sometimes you'll need to use land forces to take out anti-air batteries before launching a deep-strike air attack. Other times you'll rely on helicopter-transported infantry to assault an inaccessible base or electronic warfare to neutralize enemy defenses. These simple lessons add up to an effective demonstration of combined arms theory.

The most disappointing thing about *Real War* is that, despite the expectations generated by its self-proclaimed pedigree, it's just another second-tier RTS. *Real War* simply overpromises and underdelivers.

VERDICT ★★☆☆☆

About the only thing *Real War* gets right is the whole "war is hell" thing.

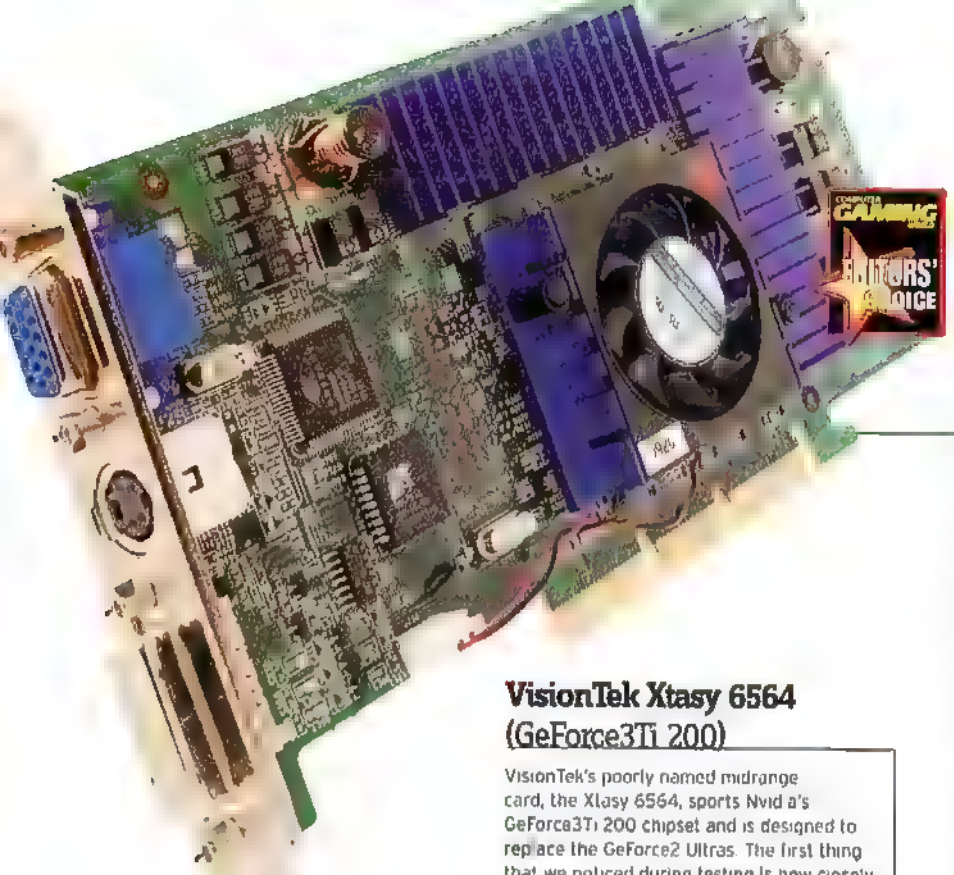
 Edited by William O'Neal

Five Card Stud!

ATI and Nvidia took a seat at the dealer's table, anted up, and laid it all on the line. And we got to play with five of the latest graphics cards! By William O'Neal

If any single aspect of the hardware game best illustrates keeping up with the Joneses, it's the graphics card market. Back in the day, it was 3dfx battling it out with the likes of Matrox, ATI, PowerVR, S3, and this upstart company called Nvidia. Nowadays, the current leader of the pack, Nvidia, is—wisely so—loath to rest on their laurels with ATI nipping at their heels. And it seems that the Santa Clara-based Nvidia is competing not only against the Radeon line of graphics cards from Canada's ATI, but also against themselves with the release of their Ti (Titanium) line of graphics cards. Less than a year after the launch of Nvidia's much-ballyhooed GeForce3 GPU, the company is set to put it out to pasture with the launch of the Titanium-based GPUs. Nvidia is now shipping three 64MB versions of their various Titanium GPUs. But ATI is hell-bent on ensuring that Nvidia ain't the only game in town

PHOTOGRAPHY BY HAYDEN TOSER



VisionTek Xtasy 6964 (GeForce3Ti 500)

At the top of the Titanium series is VisionTek's GeForce3Ti 500 card, the Xtasy 6964. On our test machine, this card achieved *Quake III: Arena* frame rates of 151 at 1024x768x16. While that's only 5 frames per second faster than what the Elsa Gladiac 920 achieved, the Xtasy 6964 is hitting the streets at $349—a lot less than the Gladiac's initial shipping price of $550. The GeForce3Ti 500 card also showed formidable power in MadOnion's 3DMark2001, besting the GeForce3-based Gladiac 920's score of 6463 with 6892.

★★★★½ **The GeForce3Ti 500 is Nvidia's successful attempt to keep ATI at bay. The GeForce3Ti 500 outperformed the Radeon 8500 in most of our tests. It also costs $100 more.**

MANUFACTURER: VisionTek WEB: www.visiontek.com PRICE: $349
SYSTEM: PC with 266MHz or faster Pentium II or AMD K6-2 or faster CPU, AGP 2.0 or higher expansion slot, CD-ROM drive, Windows 95/98/NT/ME/2000/XP, 64MB RAM

VisionTek Xtasy 6564 (GeForce3Ti 200)

VisionTek's poorly named midrange card, the Xtasy 6564, sports Nvidia's GeForce3Ti 200 chipset and is designed to replace the GeForce2 Ultras. The first thing that we noticed during testing is how closely its performance numbers resembled those of the first iteration of GeForce3 cards that we tested for our roundup back in July 2001. While the GeForce3Ti 200 scored 6080 on 3DMark2001, and the Elsa Gladiac 920 (winner of our July roundup) scored 6463, the Gladiac currently costs $400.

★★★★☆ **The GeForce3Ti 200's $199 price is midway between ATI's Radeon 7500 and 8500. And while it's $35 more than the 7500, there's no reason why you shouldn't ante up the additional cash for a superior product.**

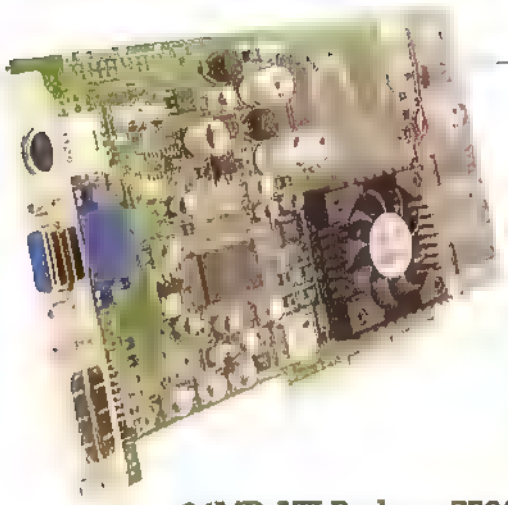
MANUFACTURER: VisionTek WEB: www.visiontek.com
PRICE: $199 SYSTEM: 266MHz or faster Pentium II or AMD K6-2 or faster CPU, AGP 2.0 or faster expansion slot, CD-ROM drive, Windows 95/98/NT/ME/2000/XP, 64MB RAM

VisionTek Xtasy 5864 (GeForce2Ti)

At about $149, the GeForce2Ti represents the low end of the graphics card spectrum and has been designed as a replacement for the GeForce2 Pro. We got our hands on VisionTek's version, the Xtasy 5864 (GeForce2Ti), and put it through its paces. Besides a horrible name—we would have preferred the "VisionTek GeForce2Ti" or the "Xtasy GeForce2Ti"—there's not much to fault the Xtasy 5864 for. On our test machine (a 1.4GHz Athlon with 512MB DDR-RAM and Windows XP Home Edition), VisionTek's GeForce2Ti scored a respectable 4121 in MadOnion's 3DMark2001 and achieved *Quake III: Arena* frame rates of 146.4 at 1024x768x16. Compare that to the ATI Radeon 7500's scores of 4117 and 117 respectively, and you'll see that the Xtasy 5864 provides a much better value.

★★★★½ **This card outperformed its closest competitor—the Radeon 7500—in all of our tests, and it's also $20 cheaper than the Radeon. It is undoubtedly the best card for budget-minded gamers. Go out and buy one now!**

MANUFACTURER: VisionTek WEB: www.visiontek.com PRICE: $149
SYSTEM: 266MHz or faster Pentium II or AMD K6-2 or faster CPU, AGP 2.0 or higher expansion slot, CD-ROM drive, Windows 95/98/NT/ME/2000/XP, 64MB RAM



64MB ATI Radeon 8500

A few months ago, ATI came to town and showed off their Radeon 8500. Their test machine was getting 3DMark2001 scores of more than 7500! Having since received my very own 8500, my excitement has turned to suspicion. Hell hath no greater fury than a reviewer who believes he's been led down the primrose path.

Bitching aside, the Radeon 8500 is a good card, and compared to VisionTek's GeForce3Ti 500, it's even cheap. The 8500 is right there with the GeForce3Ti 500 in game performance. Its benchmark performance—a measuring stick of oft-questioned usefulness—varies. The GeForce3Ti 500 blew it away in 3DWinBench 2000 and the Radeon barely edged out the GeForce3Ti 500 in 3DMark2001. But—and we're talking one of J-Lo proportions—the Radeon is $100 cheaper than the GeForce3Ti 500. That's a hell of a time at the Market Street Cinema.

★★★★☆ **If Nvidia hadn't released the GeForce3Ti 500, then the Radeon 8500 would be the undisputed king of the hill. It's a solid performer and offers the most bang for your buck, at a whopping $100 less than the GeForce3Ti 500.**

[illegible] ATI Technologies • www.atitech.ca [illegible] $250 [illegible] Pentium II or AMD CPU, AGP 2.0, CD-ROM, Windows 98/ME/2000/NT/XP

64MB ATI Radeon 7500

At $165 the Radeon 7500 isn't cheap—which might explain why we were disappointed with its performance. Its *Quake III: Arena* score of 117 frames per second at 1024x768x16, while not necessarily bad, is also not very good. That frame rate is definitely playable, but for $25 less, you can get a card that thoroughly kicks the 7500's ass. The only reason we'd recommend buying the Radeon 7500 over the GeForce2Ti is to help the Canadian economy. Then again, who really cares about the Canadian economy anyway, eh?

★★★½☆ **If the Radeon 7500 were the cheapest card in this roundup, then we would have been nicer to it. But it wasn't, so we weren't.**

[illegible] ATI Technologies • www.atitech.ca [illegible] $165 [illegible] Pentium II or AMD CPU, AGP 2.0, CD-ROM, Windows 98/ME/2000/NT/XP

It's All About the Numericals

Graphics card	Elsa Gladiac 920 (64MB GeForce3)	VisionTek Xtasy 5864 (64MB GeForce2Ti)	VisionTek Xtasy 6564 (64MB GeForce3Ti 200)	VisionTek Xtasy 6964 (64MB GeForce3Ti 500)	64MB ATI Radeon 7500	64MB ATI Radeon 8500
Test Bed	1.4GHz Athlon 512MB DDR-RAM WinXP Home Edition*	1.4GHz Athlon 512MB DDR-RAM WinXP Home Edition*	1.4GHz Athlon 512MB DDR-RAM WinXP Home Edition*	1.4GHz Athlon 512MB DDR-RAM WinXP Home Edition*	1.4GHz Athlon 512MB DDR-RAM WinXP Home Edition*	1.4GHz Athlon 512MB DDR-RAM WinXP Home Edition*
Drivers	Nvidia Detonator XP 5.13.01.2185	Nvidia Detonator XP 5.13.01.2185	Nvidia Detonator XP 5.13.01.2185	Nvidia Detonator XP 5.13.01.2185	ATI 5.13.1.3271	ATI 5.13.1.3271
Price	$400	$149	$199	$349	$165	$250
Rating	4**	4.5	4	4.5	3.5	4
Quake III 1024x768x16 (Low Texture Detail)	148	146.4	144.7	151	117	146.2
Quake III 1024x768x32 (Low Texture Detail)	144.8	126.4	144	149.8	115.5	144.5
Quake III 1600x1200x32 (Full Texture Detail)	52.2	73.9	97.4	52.4	94.8	N/A
Unreal Tournament 16-bit	43.82	43.4	43.9	44.17	45.15	51.89
Expendable 1024x768x16	87.46	91.73	86.9	87.08	82.3	82.02
Expendable 1024x768x32	86.28	89.36	86.12	86.1	79.01	80.19
Jane's USAF	43.37	41.61	42	43.02	38.58	40.63
3D GameMarks 2	87.52	84.81	86.94	88.03	78.98	84.42
3D WinMark 2000	216	147	199	241	142	206
3DMark2001	6463	4121	6080	6892	4117	7103

Note: All tests were performed on a 1.4GHz Athlon machine with 512MB of DDR-RAM, an ASUS A7A266 motherboard, a Hercules GameTheater XP sound card, a 40GB 7200-rpm Maxtor ATA hard drive, a Plextor 16/10/20 CD-RW drive, and a [illegible] DVD-ROM drive, running Windows XP Home Edition. Each card was tested with the most recent drivers provided by the manufacturer. These tests do not reflect any overclocking.
**Note: The Elsa Gladiac 920 received our standard "4" score originally awarded in July 2001.

Logitech MOMO Force

"It doesn't matter if you win by an inch or a mile—winning's winning" By William O'Neal

Logitech
www.logitech.com
$199

166MHz or faster CPU, 32MB RAM, 20MB hard drive space, CD-ROM drive, USB port, Windows 98/ME/2000/XP

Never in my wildest dreams have I ever imagined myself quoting Vin Diesel from *The Fast and the Furious*. But the moment I unpacked the Logitech MOMO Force, I was immediately reminded of cheesy guys who street-race souped up imports. Then it occurred to me that maybe I'm just jealous.

You see, before I got my pick-up truck last year, I test drove a 1.8-liter Volkswagen Golf Turbo. As I raced it around the suburbs of western Contra Costa County, the dealer informed me that—while he's not supposed to advertise this—I could buy a mod chip on the Internet that would give me an extra 40 hp. For once in my life, I made a practical decision and didn't buy the Volkswagen. Had I, you can guarantee that I would also have bought the mod chip, some new rims, an aftermarket muffler, and yes, a MOMO steering wheel.

This latest wheel from Logitech serves multiple purposes. Designed by MOMO, with force feedback based on Immersion's TouchSense technology, the Logitech MOMO Force has both given new life to Codemaster's *Colin McRae Rally 2.0* and managed to keep me on the right side of the law. The wheel itself is covered in handstitched leather (which feels great when driving), boasts a centerplate made of brushed and anodized aluminum, and even has steel paddle shifters. Wheel manufacturers often skimp on the floorboard, but because MOMO had a hand in designing this wheel, I'm sure they're to thank for the fact that the MOMO Force's floorboard ain't going anywhere.

It's not very often we get this excited about a game controller, but the MOMO Force is just that cool.

The MOMO Force connects to your computer via the USB port, so setting it up is super easy. (We've also been told that it works with PlayStation 2, but you didn't hear that from us.) The wheel sports six programmable buttons, so you can tweak your configuration however you like. You can even do things like make the paddle shifters act as the accelerator and the brake, eliminating the need for the floor unit.

It's not very often that we get this excited about a game controller, but the MOMO Force is just that cool.

Verdict: ★★★★★

Sturdy, stylish, and easy to use, the MOMO Force is easily one of the best all-around racing setups that we've seen.

Computer Gaming World's Ultimate Gaming Champion

-Computer Gaming World

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Klipsch ProMedia 5.1 THX 500-Watt
Speaker & Subwoofer System
16X/40X DVD-ROM Drive
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Sound Storm

It might be cheap, but the Hurricane Extreme sound card won't blow you away By Joel Durham

[illegible] I/O Magic
[illegible] www.iomagic.com
[illegible] $49.99

[illegible] Pentium 266MHz or faster CPU, Windows 95/98/2000/ME/NT, 16MB RAM, 40MB free hard drive space, CD-ROM, PCI slot

I/O Magic's product lineup, which includes CD- and DVD-ROM drives, scanners, modems, and digital cameras, is about as scattershot as it can be without including a new line of bovine feed. The company isn't ready to go that far, but it did recently add a three-tier selection of sound cards based on the Canyon3D-2 audio chip by ESS.

The midrange of the new cards, the Hurricane Extreme, is a pretty bare-bones part. At its core is an ESS ES1992 audio chip that provides the card's acceleration and feature set. Capable of two- and four-channel audio, the Hurricane Extreme boasts a pair of one eighth-inch minijacks and an SPDIF port for output. Of course, it also contains microphone and line-in jacks and a gameport.

The little card serves up a solid clean aural field without noise or distortion. Its built-in hardware equalizer lets you adjust its tones to suit your tastes. It offers across the board gaming compatibility, accelerating up to 64 DirectSound3D streams in hardware and offering support for the usual suspects: EAX 1.0 and 2.0, I3DL2, and A3D (remember that?). The Hurricane features Sensaura positional and environmental effects.

The Hurricane is a cinch to install. Its WDM drivers for Windows 98 and ME are solid, and there's already a stable Windows XP beta driver available for download—which is a good omen for long-term compatibility. The card comes with a modest bundle, featuring PowerDVD, a limited version of *Rune*, and an MMOG called *Terra: Battle for Mars*.

The Hurricane Extreme is a pretty bare-bones part.

A capable solution for the money, the Hurricane Extreme doesn't have the Swiss-army versatility of the Hercules Game Theater XP or the Turtle Beach Santa Cruz, nor does it pack the aural richness of Philips' Acoustic Edge. But at a mere $50, it's a sound buy.

VERDICT ★★★½☆
A relatively inexpensive sound card that still boasts full game compatibility.

WIL [illegible]
By William O'Neal

There's Something About Xbox

I recently committed adultery, and only by confessing to you—my loyal readers—will I be able to make this potentially disastrous situation better. You see, a month ago, Microsoft sent me an Xbox debug unit alone with a not-so-shabby list of titles: *NFL Fever 2002*, *Gotham City Racing*, *Munch's Odyssey*, and this little-known game called *Halo*. And while *Electronic Gaming Monthly*'s reviews editor Che Chou likes to point out that we play "games," and not "platforms," the fact that I've spent the last few weeks playing Xbox titles—to the detriment of my *Counter-Strike* skills—just seems wrong.

As I write this column, I know that I'll receive a deluge of email from readers dissing me for giving 300-plus words to a console (my recent columns have elicited so much email that I know one thing: Y'all ain't afraid to share your opinions—and I love you all for it), but there's something about the launch of the Xbox that seems significant for all gamers, especially PC gamers.

Since it's made by Microsoft, I guess it's "technically" okay for a PC gamer to get into Xbox.

The relationship between console and PC games has always been a difficult one to describe. On one hand, there is no real difference between the two, and talking about any so-called difference is pointless. On the other hand, Xbox is the only console that I, a 100 percent fully committed PC gamer, have ever been excited about—not PS2, not DreamCast, and not even GameCube, I couldn't care less. But the launch of Xbox brings another point to light that is difficult to ignore: If you're committed to a specific platform—let's say you just forked over $3,000 for a brand-new Athlon XP rig, or you waited in line for hours to buy a PS2—you want to play the best games around. And if you own a PC and no Xbox, you're bummed that you have to wait—nay, pray—for Bungie to release a PC version of *Halo*.

Why does this matter? Because PC developers are getting on the Xbox bandwagon, and with the ever-growing dearth of good PC games, this is a little scary. What's even scarier is that old-school PC gamers like me are finding ourselves playing split-screen driving games while sitting on the couch.

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MAXIMUM PC KICK ASS PRODUCT

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Toshiba PDR-M21 Digital Still Camera

A nifty little camera that takes some decent photos By William O'Neal

Toshiba
www.toshiba.com
$279

PC, Win95/98/2000/ME/XP, USB port, 16MB RAM, 20MB free hard drive space, CD-ROM drive

On a recent drive from San Francisco to Los Angeles, my wife pointed out one of those combination SUV/truck contraptions. I think it was either a Chevy Avalanche (a vehicle that we've since dubbed the "What were they thinking?") or the Ford Explorer Sport-Trac. "The bed is too small to haul anything," she pointed out, "and the back seats are so small and uncomfortable that they're useless," she continued. She summed the whole thing up by noting that compromise seems to be the guiding concept of our generation.

And it doesn't end with cars. We've seen more stupid combination devices than you can imagine. Does anyone really need a digital camera that is also an MP3 player? Basically, in their quest to be everything for everyone, these devices are nothing for anyone. Which is why we're so pleased with Toshiba's PDR-M21. It does one thing: take pictures. And while they're not the best pictures in the world, for $279 you'll be pleased with the results.

The PDR-M21 takes photos at resolutions of up to 1600x1200, and it boasts three compression settings: Normal for standard images, Fine for maximum image quality, and Basic, which gives you the lowest image quality but allows the most photos to be taken and stored on the included 8MB SmartMedia card. (You might want to upgrade to a higher-capacity SmartMedia card.) No, you can't use the PDR-M21 to make home movies, but so what—that's why they make camcorders. With the PDR-M21 you can take photos with the 2X digital zoom and even check out your images on the 1.8-inch LCD monitor on the back of the camera. The PDR M21 runs on four AA batteries, and after weeks of use and dozens of photos, the batteries that came with the camera are still going strong. It has a built in flash, saves images in either .jpeg or .tiff format, and connects to your PC via an included USB cable. Lastly, the PDR-M21 ships with connectivity software that is really easy to use.

No, you can't use the PDR-M21 to make home movies, but that's why they make camcorders.

Basically, if you need a good digital camera, chances are you'll be pretty happy with the PDR M21. We sure are

VERDICT ★★★★☆

Not the best digital camera around, but considering its $279 price, its ability to take pictures at up to 1600x1200, and its ease of use, the Toshiba PRO-M21 more than gets the job done.

TECH MEDIC

Which Graphics Card Should I Buy?

I'm having trouble choosing between Nvidia's GeForce3Ti 500 and ATI's Radeon 8500 graphics cards. I have a 1GHz AMD Athlon-based machine with 394MB of PC133 RAM. Which of these two would you buy and why?

Rafael Urrea

Just when you thought it was safe to get back into the graphics card waters, ATI releases the 64MB Radeon 8500 and complicates things. Choosing between these two cards is pretty difficult. The Radeon 8500 and the GeForce3Ti 500 are about as close as two competing cards can be. The GeForce3Ti 500 achieved *Quake III: Arena* frame rates of 97.4fps at 1600x1200x32 with full texture detail turned on, and the Radeon scored 94.8. However, the GeForce3Ti 500 blew the Radeon away in Ziff Davis' 3DWinBench 2000, scoring 241 to the Radeon's 206. On the other hand, the Radeon won the 3DMark2001 battle, scoring 7103 to the GeForce's 6892. But you want an answer. Me? I'd buy the GeForce3Ti 500. Why? The GeForce3Ti beat the Radeon in *Quake III: Arena* and Ziff's 3DWinBench 2000, and the Radeon's 3DMark2001 score edge is negligible.

David vs. Goliath

I am preparing to buy a new system and am leaning toward the Alienware Area 51, with the 1.8GHz Intel Pentium 4. While I am a little turned off by the $2,000 price tag, I've had an array of no-hum systems in the past, and I want to do it right this time. However, while perusing my copy of *CGW*, I turned to the back page and noticed that the Dell Dimension 8100 has very similar components, and lists for almost $500 less than the Area 51. Is this a no-brainer, or is there a good reason for the Alienware price tag being a little heftier? Any thoughts on the Dimension 8100 versus the Area 51?

Rick Siedelmann

I'd get the Dell. In all likelihood, the two machines—if they're similarly configured—will perform equally. And, well, $500 is $500.

"If You Build It..."

I have an AMD K6-2 processor (350MHz), with 128MB of RAM and a 16MB Voodoo3. I am looking for a computer that costs $999 or less but has good gaming capabilities. So far I have seen nothing. My computer is good for playing games like *Counter-Strike*, *UT*, *System Shock 2*, and *Crimson Skies*, but when I play games like *Red Faction*, *Operation Flashpoint*, *Deus Ex*, or *Max Payne*, I get really bad frame rates (like, under 7), and the graphics quality is bad, too. So I'm looking for a computer that has at least a 1.2GHz processor, 256MB of RAM, at least a 32MB GeForce2 MX, and a 12X DVD-ROM drive. What should I do?

Jamarr

You should build a computer. Buy a 1.4GHz AMD Athlon processor, an ASUS A7M266 motherboard, 256MB of DDR-RAM, an Antec SX-635 case, a 12X DVD-ROM drive, a 64MB GeForce3Ti 500 card, and Windows XP Home Edition. You can get all of this for less than $1,000. Put your current hard drive, modem, and network card in it, and you'll have a truly ass-kicking system.

Our Illustrious Editor-in-Chief

Was Jeff Green dropped on his head when he was a kid?

Robert Bishop

Yes.

Which Speakers Should I Buy?

I'm buying a new PC, and it'll have a 5.1 sound card. I can't decide which speaker set to buy. I have narrowed it down to three: Klipsch 4.1, Klipsch 5.1, or Midland 8200. The 8200s were my first choice, but then I realized they're only 200 watts and the Klipsch 4.1s boast 400 watts (but they aren't digital). The Klipsch 5.1s are 500-watt speakers, and they're digital, but they cost 70 bucks more! So you see, I'm really confused. Would 200 watts be enough or do I need more, and should my new speakers be digital?

David Pellegrini

Whether you need the additional watts depends on what you plan to do with your computer. Personally, I would go with the Klipsch 5.1s anyway: They're digital (for what it's worth), are plenty powerful, and, really, when you're talking about an entire system, $70 is a drop in the bucket.

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VisionTek's Xtasy Everything

Sometimes everything isn't enough! By Ken Feinstein

[illegible] VisionTek
www.visiontek.com
[illegible] $99

[illegible] 400MHz or higher PC Windows 98SE/ME/2000/XP, 128MB RAM AGP slot, DVD-ROM drive, 5GB hard drive space

Wouldn't it be great if you could just drop a card into your PC and turn the PC into a full-featured, Tivo-style digital video recorder? While VisionTek's Xtasy Everything 5564 graphics card falls short of being such a magic card, it does combine solid 3D-graphics performance with video capture, TV tuner, and TV-out capabilities.

Based on Nvidia's Personal Cinema technology, the Xtasy consists of three parts: a 64MB GeForce2 MX 400 graphics card with TwinView dual-monitor support, a Day-Glo green plastic breakout box, and a remote control. The breakout box connects to the graphics card via a proprietary cable and contains the TV tuner and infrared port for the remote control. It also has s-video and composite video-in and video out ports as well as a coaxial antenna connector.

On the software side, WinDVR displays the TV picture on your monitor and can also record TV programs onto your hard drive, letting you record as you would with a VCR, as well as pause and replay live video. WinDVD plays DVDs if you have a DVD-ROM drive, and MGI VideoWave captures and edits video. The remote control works with both WinDVR and WinDVD; in fact, you can launch the apps directly from the remote.

It took several calls to technical support to get the Xtasy installed with all of its features working correctly. There's no printed manual, just an installation poster and the setup instructions and troubleshooting tips included on the CD.

If you just want to watch TV on your PC, you're better off with a stand-alone TV tuner card.

Once it was installed, we enjoyed using the WinDVR software for watching live TV. Using it as a recorder, though, means a serious load on your CPU and the constant churning of your hard drive as it compresses and saves the video; you definitely won't be recording in the background while playing *Counter-Strike*. The video-in capabilities also come in handy for playing console games on your PC monitor and for late-night Webcam adventures. TV-out lets you play games and watch DVDs on your TV or record your gameplay or video creations to a VCR.

The performance of the 64MB GeForce2 MX 400 was exactly what we expected: good enough to play the latest games, but lacking the forward-looking features found in a GeForce3 Ti 500 or ATI Radeon 8500.

If you just want to watch TV in a window on your PC, you're probably better off getting a stand-alone TV tuner card. It's a wiser investment, since you can keep using it even as you upgrade to ever-faster 3D cards. But as an integrated solution, the Xtasy makes sense, especially for a dorm room or other situation where you'd use your PC for watching TV and DVDs.

VERDICT ★★★☆☆

While the Xtasy got the job done, getting it working was a pain.

CREATIVE

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CREATIVE

How to: Build a System

By William O'Neal

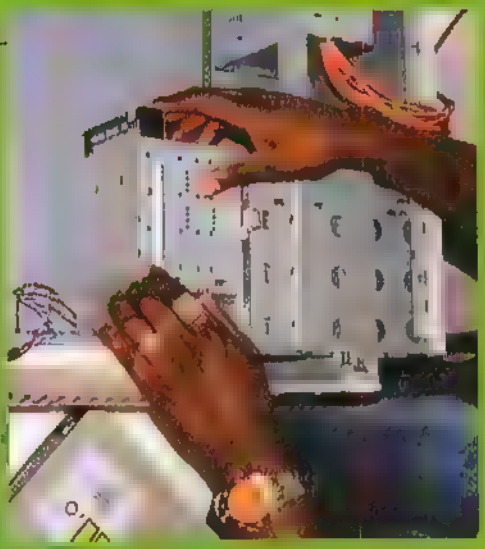
The most difficult part of building a system—aside from coming up with the necessary cash—is deciding which parts to go with. Because I deal with that every month in the Killer Rigs section, I decided not to get into that here. Rather, I've based this how-to on the 2GHZ Pentium 4 machine that is currently my Power Rig. Enjoy!

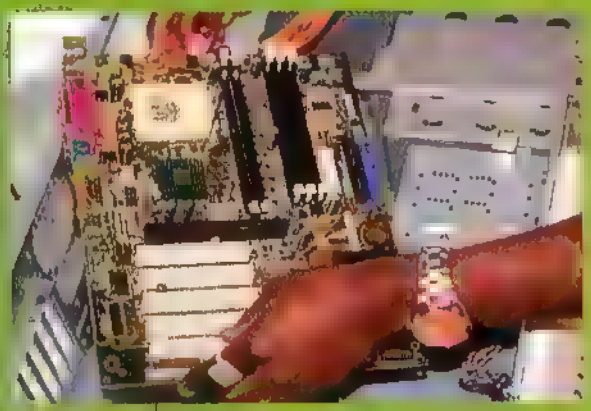
STEP 1

No one likes to read instructions. But this time, bite the bullet, put all notions of technological machismo aside, and read the manual for the motherboard. Have I mentioned yet that you should read the manual for the motherboard? Nearly every problem that I've ever encountered building a machine can be traced back to skipping this step. If your mobo is jumperless—like mine—then you're in luck. If it has jumpers, read about 'em in the manual, but if you can, leave 'em where they are and go with the manufacturer's default settings.

STEP 2

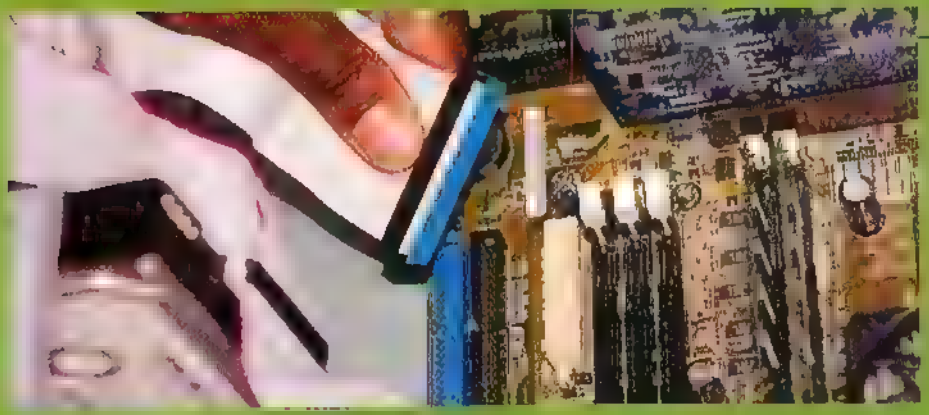
INSTALL THE DRIVES I like to install all the drives (floppy, CD-RW, DVD-ROM, hard drive, and in some cases the power supply, if it doesn't come with the case) prior to installing the motherboard. Because the mobo is one of the more fragile components, I try to avoid mucking around with clunkier components—like drives—when it's already installed.





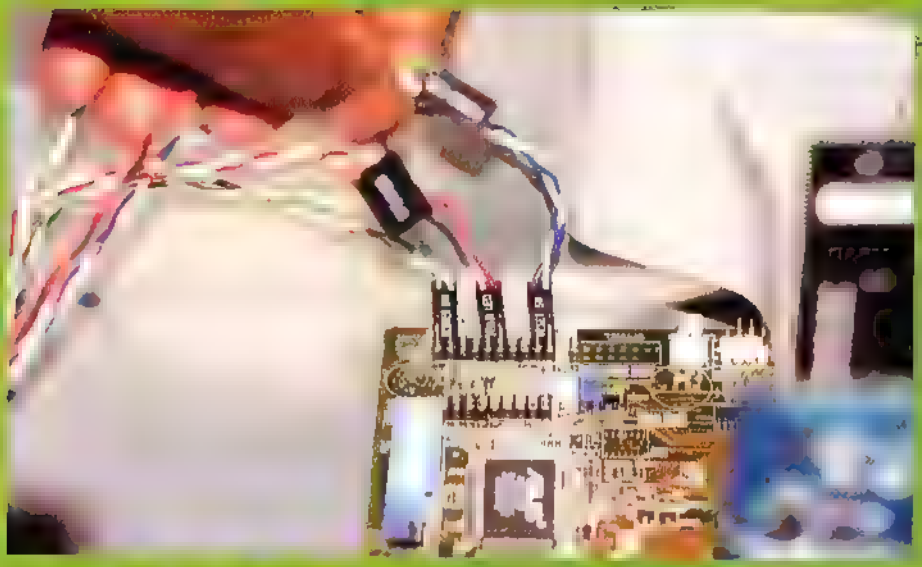
STEP 3

INSTALL THE MOTHERBOARD Carefully place the mobo in the case and even more carefully screw it in. If your motherboard comes with a faceplate for its ports and whatnot, install that before installing the board.

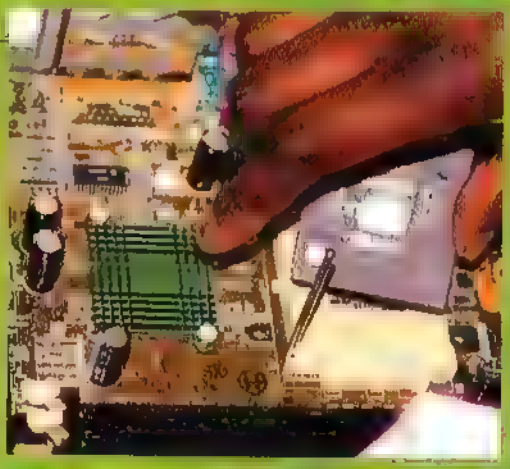


STEP 4

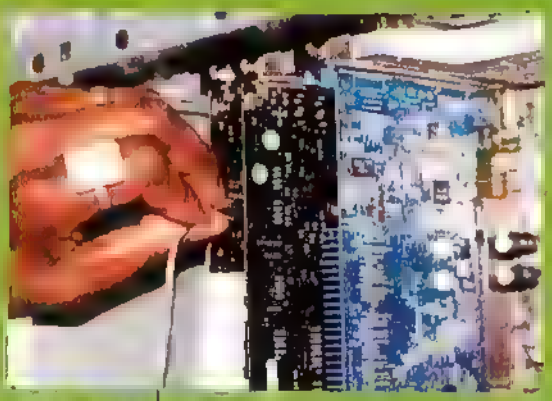
CONNECT THE EIDE CABLES Because they're the most difficult to deal with, I like to connect the ribbon cables for the various EIDE devices first. Also, it's best to connect the EIDE devices to the motherboard with the master coming first in the line and the slave following. In other words, if your CD-RW drive is the master and your DVD-ROM drive is the slave, then ensure that the CD-RW drive is attached to the connector that's closest to the mobo. Follow that same logic when connecting your hard and floppy drives.



Remember when I mentioned that you should read the manual that came with the motherboard? You should also read the manual that came with your case. It is there that you'll find out which case cables to attach to which connectors on the mobo. Get this wrong and—at best—your machine won't boot. At worst, well, we're not gonna get into that.

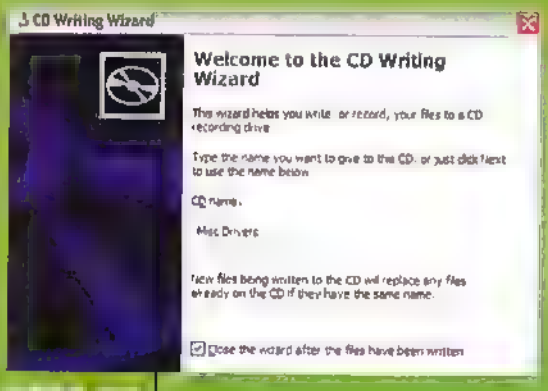


Carefully install the CPU and the CPU fan. Be sure to plug the CPU fan's power cable into its respective plug on the mobo. Now install the RAM as well as the graphics card and various PCI cards.



CABLES! After you've installed the PCI cards, connect the DVD and CD-RW drives to the CD-in and AUX-in ports on the sound card. Now connect the power cables from the power supply to the mobo and the various drives. Lastly, connect the monitor, speaker, mouse, keyboard, and any network or modem cables.

The moment of truth is nigh. Plug in the CPU's main power cord, insert any boot floppies, hit the power button, and cross your fingers. If you followed all the instructions in the various manuals, you should be seeing some sort of BIOS information prior to the system booting off of the floppy. If not, retrace your steps and reconnect everything, paying special attention to cables leading from the case to the mobo. If everything is up to par at this point, go ahead and install your OS and the mobo drivers that—hopefully—came with the motherboard.



OH! Because you never know how this is gonna go, it's best to download all of your hardware drivers (most important, your network/modem drivers) and burn them to a CD before breaking down your system or embarking on this adventure. Also, put any utilities, such as Winzip, on the CD.

Killer Rigs

The best recipe for building your ultimate gaming machine

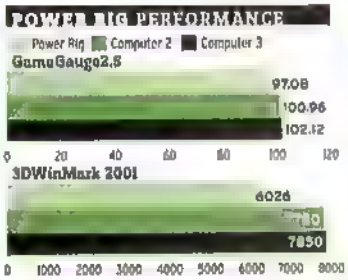
By William O'Neal

POWER RIG

Power Rig $2,956

The hardware in my Power Rig hasn't changed much, but the benchmark scores have shot up. Rahul Sood, the president of Voodoo Computers up in Canada, suggested I send my 2GHz Pentium 4 Power Rig to him to receive some "Voodoo magic." Without changes to any of the hardware, my *Quake III: Arena* frame rates at 1024x768x16 went from 173.1 to 187.9, and my 3DMark2001 score went to 7780 from 6026. Rahul won't tell me what he did to the machine. (Ancient Canadian secret, huh?)

Then I put Nvidia's new GeForce3Ti 500 card in my Power Rig, and as the numbers reveal, things got even better.



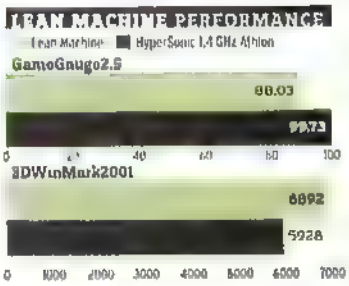
COMPONENT	MANUFACTURER	PRICE
Case	Antec SX-635	$90
Motherboard	Intel D850MD	$150
CPU	2GHz Pentium 4/400MHz FSB	$562
Memory Kingston	256MB PC800 RDRAM	$125
Graphics Card	VisionTek XTASY 6469 (GeForce3Ti 500)	$349
3.5" Floppy Drive	Teac	$20
Hard Drive	Maxtor DiamondMax 80GB EIDE	$200
CD-RW Drive	Plextor PlexWriter 24/10/40A	$250
DVD-ROM Drive	Creative PC-DVD Encore 12X	$150
Monitor	Samsung SyncMaster 955DF 19"	$280
Sound Card	Creative Labs Sound Blaster Audigy	$250
Speakers	Klipsch Promedia 5.1	$350
Modem	Actiontec 56K PCI Pro Modem	$40
Keyboard/Mouse	Microsoft Internet Keyboard Pro w/ Intellimouse Optical	$75
Joystick	Saitek Cyborg USB Gold Stick	$40
Game Pad	Microsoft SideWinder GamePad USB	$25
TOTAL		$2956

LEAN MACHINE

Lean Machine $1,459

HyperSonic Sonic Fury 1.4GHz Athlon $1,400

By now you've noticed that what was once the Power Rig is now the Lean Machine. In the world of technology it be's that way some times. At more than $1,400, the Lean Machine is still a pretty penny, but if you swap out that GeForce3Ti 500 card that I'm using for a GeForce3Ti 200, you'll save $150. You might also notice that I went with rather expensive CD-RW and hard drives. "Why?" you ask. Because I can. Oh yeah, I also upped the memory to 512MB of DDR RAM. Also because I can.



COMPONENT	MANUFACTURER	PRICE
Case	Antec SX-635	$90
Motherboard	ASUS A7A266	$130
CPU	1.4GHz AMD Athlon	$150
Memory	512MB Crucial DDR-RAM	$100
Graphics Card	VisionTek XTASY 6469 (GeForce3Ti 500)	$349
3.5" Floppy Drive	Teac	$20
Hard Drive	Maxtor DiamondMax 40GB EIDE	$100
CD-RW Drive	Plextor PlexWriter 8/4/32	$100
DVD-ROM Drive	N/A	N/A
Monitor	Samsung SyncMaster 753 DF 17"	$175
Sound Card	Hercules Fortissimo II	$40
Speakers	Altec Lansing ACS95W	$25
Modem	Actiontec 56K PCI Pro Modem	$40
Keyboard/Mouse	Microsoft Internet Keyboard Pro w/ Intellimouse Optical	$75
Joystick	Saitek Cyborg USB Gold Stick	$40
Game Pad	Microsoft SideWinder GamePad USB	$25
TOTAL		$1459

The hardware in my Power Rig hasn't changed that much, but the benchmark scores have shot up.

The Power Rig is the base machine with a 64MB GeForce3 card. Computer 2 is the Power Rig after being tweaked by Voodoo PC. Computer 3 is the tweaked Power Rig, but with a 64MB GeForce3Ti 500 card.

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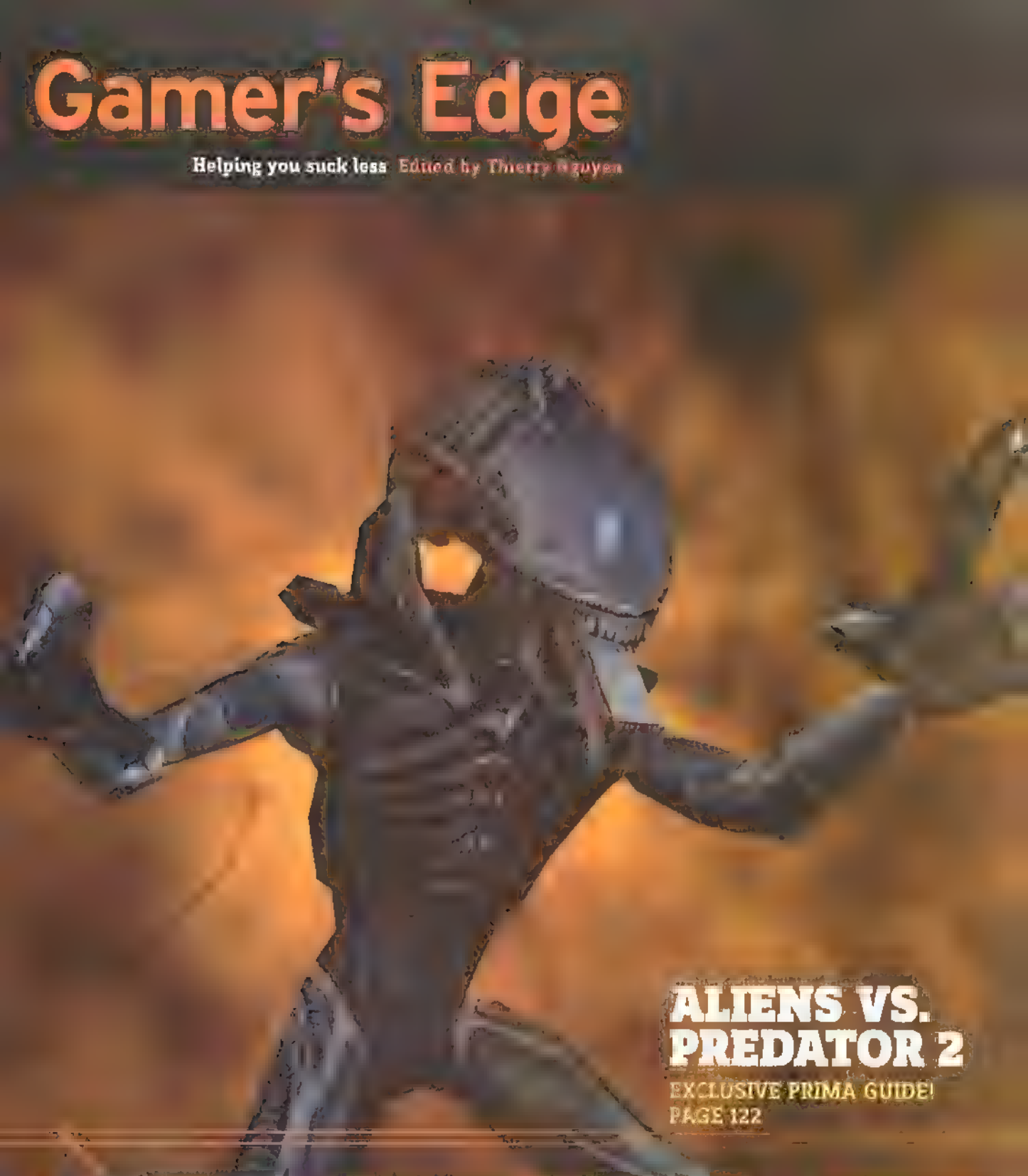
Gamer's Edge

Helping you suck less Edited by Thierry Nguyen



ALIENS VS. PREDATOR 2

EXCLUSIVE PRIMA GUIDE!
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INSIDE

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COMMANDOS 2: MEN OF HONOR
Be meaner than the Dirty Dozen with these tricks. **PAGE 128**

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You've got questions, here are some of the answers. **PAGE 130**

KOHAN: AHRIMAN'S GIFT
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AN EXCLUSIVE STRATEGY FROM PRIMA GAMES AND CGW

ALIENS vs PREDATOR 2

THINK YOU'LL SEE YOUR LIFE FLASH BEFORE YOU WHEN YOU DIE? ALL YOU'LL SEE IS TEETH.

MARINE TACTICS

FIGHTING ALIENS

Aliens hurt you only at close range, so keep your distance and use quick-firing, quick-loading weapons. (Slow reload is the kiss of death against Aliens.) Of course, keeping your distance is easier said than done. Aliens are very fast, and they close expanses with amazing alacrity. When they converge on a target, they hit from all sides—even from above and below.

To counter Alien speed, try the following technique: Go to an open space if one is available, and then use the backpedaling technique almost exclusively. Packs of Aliens often string out in a ragged line as they pursue, making it easy to pick them off. Long passageways and corridors, even if narrow, make good Alien killing grounds. Strafing techniques are somewhat less effective against the agile, pouncing bugs.

Against the powerful Praetorian, you need an armor-piercing weapon. The minigun is best, but grenades, rockets, and the Alt-Fire ammo for both your shotgun (slugs) and pistol (tungsten-core bullets) also penetrate armor.

GAMER'S EDGE

FIGHTING PREDATORS

In single-player missions, Aliens usually swarm, but encounters with Predators are one-on-one affairs. The Predator's overwhelming strength and vicious Combistick make infighting with him a losing proposition. Unlike the Alien, the Predator has decent midrange weapons. If you simply backpedal in a straight line, he'll toast you with his Plasma Pistol or Plasmacaster.

Keep your distance and strafe: Dodge from side to side or even circle-strafe—that is, strafe while keeping the target in sight, which slides you in a wide circle around him. Heavier weapons such as your grenade and rocket launchers (or the pulse grenades from your pulse rifle Alt-Fire) work best.

FIGHTING OTHER MARINES

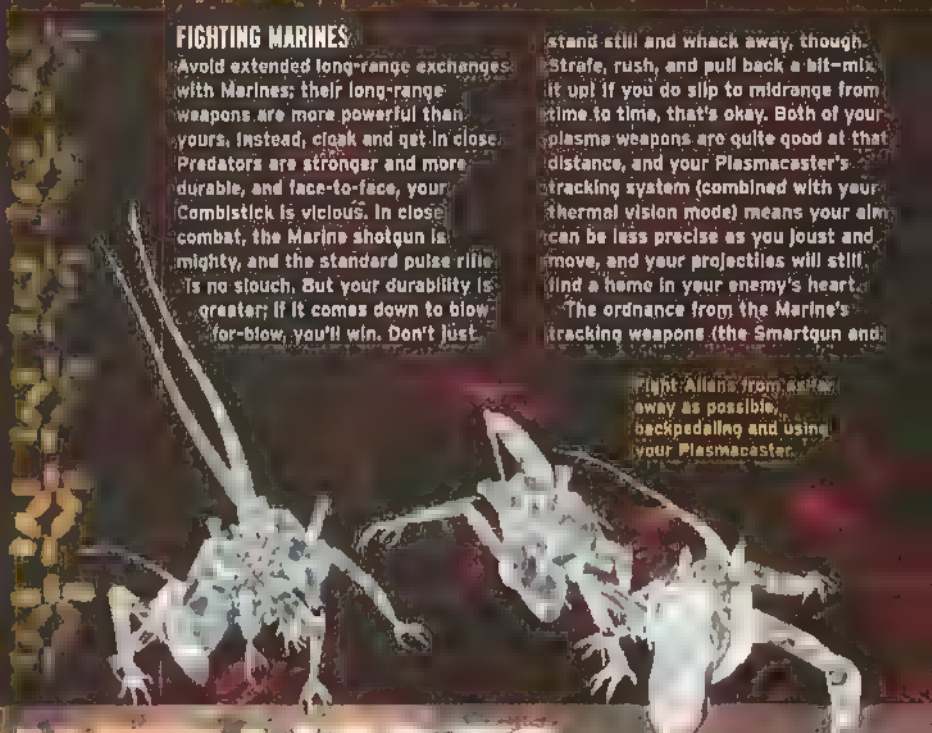
In multiplayer games, you face other Marines and mercenary soldiers hired by the Weyland-Yutani Corporation. Take advantage of the very weaknesses you compensate for when playing as a Marine. Pick off slow humans with sniper fire from high ground, or hide in the darkness to exploit human vision limitations. The combination of powerful weapons, lack of mobility, and average armor all add up to short, bloody battles when a Marine encounters other Marines.

PREDATOR COMBAT TACTICS

FIGHTING MARINES

Avoid extended long-range exchanges with Marines; their long-range weapons are more powerful than yours. Instead, cloak and get in close. Predators are stronger and more durable, and face-to-face, your Combistick is vicious. In close combat, the Marine shotgun is mighty, and the standard pulse rifle is no slouch. But your durability is greater; if it comes down to blow-for-blow, you'll win. Don't just stand still and whack away, though. Strafe, rush, and pull back a bit—mix it up! If you do slip to midrange from time to time, that's okay. Both of your plasma weapons are quite good at that distance, and your Plasmacaster's tracking system (combined with your thermal vision mode) means your aim can be less precise as you joust and move, and your projectiles will still find a home in your enemy's heart.

The ordnance from the Marine's tracking weapons (the Smartgun and



Fight Aliens from as far away as possible, backpedaling and using your Plasmacaster.

MULTIPLAYER MODES

STANDARD DEATHMATCH TIPS

If you see your enemy first, you have the upper hand. Either kill him or withdraw. Keep moving, especially side to side. Take advantage of the different species' weaknesses. For example, Predators often get lazy and use only one vision mode. If you are an Alien and you see a Predator hunting a human, you know that he's probably using thermal vision mode and not paying attention to you.

TEAM DEATHMATCH TIPS

Stay together! This applies to all three species. Use all the classes—this is particularly important for Aliens. Alien teams should let the Praetorian and Predalien (the largest and most durable Aliens) distract foes while faster allies finish them off. Marines should use Smartguns and fire-tracking rockets with the rocket launcher to find cloaked Predators, and drop proximity grenades and smart mines to protect the rear.

HUNT TIPS

In this game, one or more players are designated as Hunter, and everyone else is Prey. Only Hunters can accumulate frags. If a Prey kills a Hunter, the two mutate into each other and respawn to new locations—that is, the Prey becomes the Hunter race, and Hunter becomes Prey. The game continues until the maximum number of frags or the time limit is reached.

One other note: The host sets the ratio between the two teams. (The default setting puts the ratio of Hunters to Prey at 1:2.) If players drop out, changing the ratio, the game automatically mutates players to restore the host-specified ratio.

When you are the Hunter, remember that no one else can score, so take your time and maximize your kills. When you are Prey, try not to kill other Prey characters. This hurts your score and makes it easier for the Hunter to kill you.

SURVIVOR TIPS

Survivor starts in a Tag mode in which it's every man for himself. The first person killed becomes a Mutant, everyone else becomes a Survivor, and gameplay moves into the Survive mode. For each second you stay alive as a Survivor, you gain one point. When a Mutant kills a Survivor, the Mutant gets 10 points and the Survivor respawns as a Mutant. But if a Mutant kills another Mutant, or a Survivor kills another Survivor, the killer loses 10 points. (A Survivor who accidentally kills himself also turns into a Mutant but doesn't gain or lose any points.) The round is over when all Survivor players are killed and thus respawned as Mutants. The player with the highest score wins.

Dying is no penalty for Mutants; you only gain points for Survivor kills. So Mutant tactics should be aggressive, almost reckless. Because Survivors are scored for time and Mutants are scored for kills, Mutant players want to end the round as quickly as possible. If pinned down, Survivors should work together, using Team Deathmatch tactics of fire and cover.

OVERRUN

This is a team-based game played for a set number of rounds. Players divide into two groups, Attackers and

rocket launcher) locates you if you are moving. If a human faces you carrying one of these weapons, don't move! Wait until the human turns away.

FIGHTING ALIENS

Aliens can't hurt you unless they are in your face, so keep them at range. When a batch of Aliens attacks, switch immediately to Electrovision (Red) mode, whip that Plasmacaster onto your shoulder, and start running backward, firing quick shots. Your Plasmacaster is the ultimate Alien killer; its tracking feature helps you mow down the mob as its projectiles find the mark every time.

If you get backed into a corner or deplete your energy store, use your Combistick to slash a hole through Alien ranks. (If Aliens are in point-blank range, your targeting system weapons don't have room to track properly.) Then spin and start backpedaling again, firing or slashing all the way.

Forget the Speargun. Aliens just move too fast. Use it later to snipe at the slower humans. Stick to the plasma guns, switching quickly to your infighting weapons (Combistick and Wristblades) if bugs get too close.

FIGHTING OTHER PREDATORS

Your fellow species members are powerful and durable like you. So in Predator-versus-Predator battles, cloak and hope your opponent isn't in Predtech vision mode. Try the Disc or a Plasmacaster supercharged shot as your opening salvo. Soon you'll both be in Predtech mode, slinging vision-specific tracking shots. Keep moving! You can even dodge plasma projectiles guided by a target lock if you're on your toes. As you trade blasts, strafe from side to side. Then make a rush and try to slip behind your foe, hopefully breaking out of any tracking lock.

Defenders. Each round lasts for a fixed period of time, and there is no respawning—if killed, you are out until the next round. If at least one Defender survives the timed round, the Defenders get one point per team member still alive. If all Defenders are eliminated, the Attackers get one point per team member still alive.

The team with the most points at the end of all rounds is the winner. TIP: Work together to concentrate fire on targeted enemies. Learn the maps beforehand. Good Overrun teams will ambush their enemies at the key choke points.

EVAC

Evac is another team-based game played for a set number of rounds. Players split up into two groups, Attack and Evac. The Evac team must evacuate one or more of its members before the round ends. To evacuate, a team member must reach the map's Evac Zone and stay there—alive—for 10 seconds. Attackers must prevent Evac players from evacuating before the round ends. Attackers also win by killing all of the Evac team. Each round lasts for a fixed period of time, and there is no respawning—if killed, you are out until the next round. TIP: Tactics are the same as in Overrun and other team-based games. Obviously, the Attack team should post a strong squad in unobstructed free-fire positions around the map's Evac Zone. This squad should emphasize power over mobility.

PREDATOR MP TIPS

Few things are more satisfying than finding a clear shot at the tucked tail of your enemy. Good Predator players use their powerful crouch-leap to hop completely over a foe, executing a 180-degree spin in midair to land facing the foe's back.

MARINE MP TIPS

As a Marine, you're the slowest and most item-dependent of the trio. Keep an eye out for where your favorite weapons spawn and waste no time getting there. In multiplayer games, the weight of your superweapons (the minigun, Smartgun, and rocket launcher) creates a handicap that restricts your speed to a walk, which reduces the effectiveness of your backpedaling technique.

ALIENS COMBAT TACTICS

FIGHTING MARINES

Marines are fairly easy to kill if you get to them. But Marine weapons are lethal against Aliens at any range; their long-range salvos are particularly troublesome, because you can't retaliate or even distract from a distance. The key to victory against a human opponent is close combat. Get in tight before he can unleash his arsenal! This means stealth, sneak, or flank attacks and avoiding well-lit open areas. Never wander into the center of a big room when fighting a Marine.

FIGHTING PREDATORS

Predators are far more durable than Marines, so even the stealthiest surprise attack is unlikely to kill one outright. Hit-and-run tactics work best. Dart in, strike with a supercharged tail, and dart out.

Find cover and wait for the Predator to approach. Then repeat the process. If you find yourself cornered, unleash a pounce attack and then hurry away.

FIGHTING OTHER ALIENS

Alien-versus-Alien battle is some of the most interesting multiplayer gaming we've seen. These are clawing, spinning, biting grudge matches, with victory usually going to the player who lands the first solid hit.

The key to any Alien victory is to strike first; this is even more true against another Alien.

ALIENS MULTIPLAYER

Alien tactics offer some unique challenges. Your biggest advantage is that you start off armed to the teeth. With your claws, tail, and pounce attack ready, get out there fast and begin killing as quickly as possible. Take advantage of the unarmed or freshly spawned. You have speed and agility, but don't go up with a fully armed Marine or Predator. Instead, use your speed and pounce attack to outmaneuver and attack from behind every chance you get.

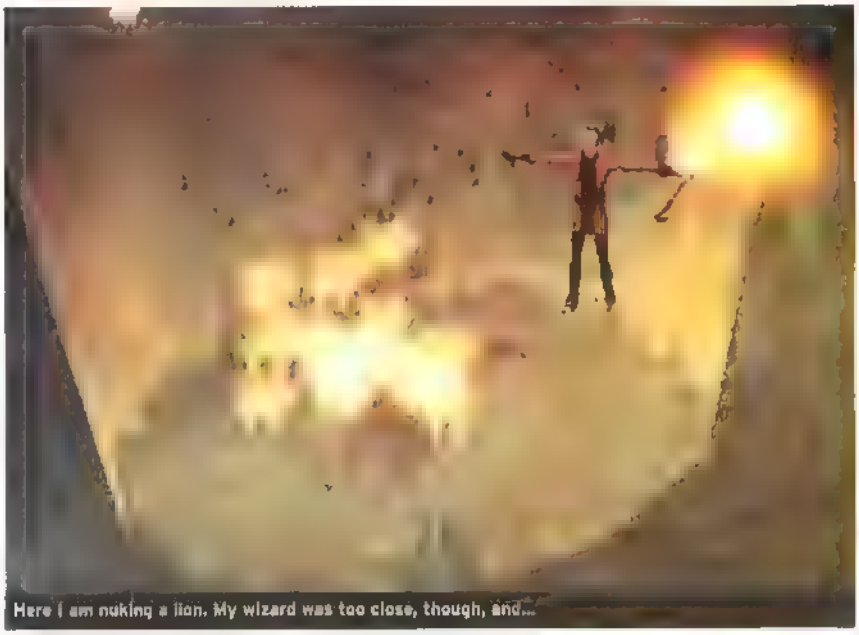
The Alien pounce attack is extremely lethal and the best way to navigate around any map. Your pounce eviscerates the unlucky opponent but leaves you without a corpse for health replenishment. The recuperative pause between pounces leaves you high and dry at inopportune moments, so plan accordingly.

Often a multiplayer melee leaves you with no time to carefully line up headbites, pounces, or tail stuns, so get up close and personal and let your claws fly. In a close-range melee, keep your crosshair centered on your target and strafe sideways, holding down your primary Fire key. This moves you in a circular pattern around your victim. Remember that your claw attack also replenishes your health, but only if done on corpses. Simply claw a dead body repeatedly until nothing is left.

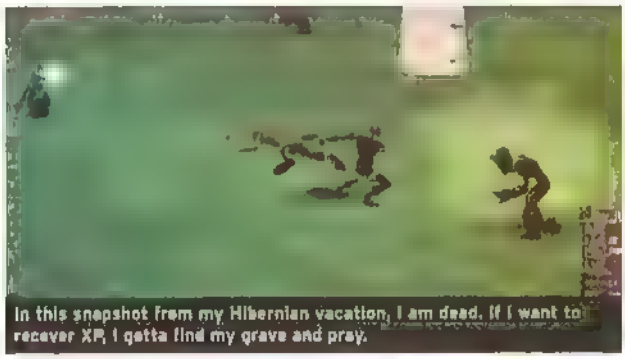
Dark Age of Camelot

Make light of this dark age with our newbie's guide By Mark Asher

Ready to wade into battle with goblins, giant spiders, wolves, ghosts, and other dire creatures in Mythic Entertainment's *Dark Age of Camelot*? Here are some tips for getting started with this massively multiplayer game that's off to a great start: more than 100,000 players have gone online in its first month.


Here I am nuking a lion. My wizard was too close, though, and...

...he had to run because he can't melee well.


In this snapshot from my Hibernian vacation, I am dead. If I want to recover XP, I gotta find my grave and pray.

Picking a Character

Dark Age offers a wide variety of character types for you to play. The game is divided into three realms: Albion (think King Arthur), Midgard (think Vikings), and Hibernia (think ancient Ireland with elves). Each realm has unique character types that are not found in the other realms, but there's a lot of overlap in how the classes function. For example, the Albion Mercenary is a fighter similar in function to the Hibernian Blademaster.

You should also note that the realm you pick effectively locks you out of playing in the other realms with your character, so your first choice, picking the character you want to play, is one of your most important ones.

Ask yourself what kind of character you want to play. Do you like a lot of swordplay? Do you like to cast a lot of spells? Or do you prefer a role like that of a healer or a stealthy ranger type? There is a wide variety of character types in *Dark Age*: pure fighters, hybrid fighters, pure spellcasters, hybrid spellcasters, pet classes, healers, and stealth classes. Here's a brief rundown:

Pure fighters (no spells or stealth) include the Hero and Blademaster from Hibernia, the Armsman and Mercenary from Albion, and the Warrior from Midgard. Choose one of these if you want a character that jumps to the front of battle and cleaves foes with mighty blows.

Hybrid fighters (have some spells but also good melee ability) include the Champion and Warden from Hibernia, the Paladin and Friar from Albion, and the Berserker and Thane from Midgard. Pick one of these if you want to play a fighter with some interesting spellcasting ability that augments your melee skills.

Pure spellcasters (direct spells at the enemy but have feeble melee ability) include the Mentalist and Eldritch from Hibernia, the Sorcerer and Wizard from Albion, and the Runemaster from Midgard. Choose one of these if you like to play a magic user that directly damages or weakens the enemy. Note that the Sorcerer can also charm monsters, so it's a pet class as well.

Hybrid spellcasters (casters with a mix of harmful and beneficial spells and some melee ability) include the Bard from Hibernia, the Minstrel from Albion, and the Skald and Shaman from Midgard. Choose one of these if you want a character who can melee a little but who also gets beneficial group spells and some damage spells as well.

Pet classes (can summon a pet or charm a monster that will fight for them) include the Enchanter from Hibernia, the Cabalist and Theurgist from Albion, and the Spiritmaster from Midgard. Choose one of these if you like to stand back while a minion you control does most of the fighting for you. You get a variety of other spells to play around with too, though you don't have the direct damage capability of the pure spellcasters.

Healers (restore health to self and allies) include the Druid from Hibernia, the Cleric from Albion, and the Healer from Midgard. Play these classes if you like to be everyone's friend. Healers keep others alive during combat and also have a variety of spells that enhance the abilities of their allies. The Druid can also charm some animals, so it's a pet class as well.

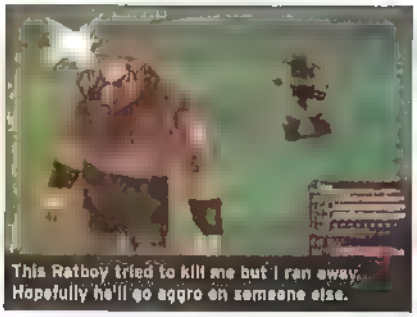
Stealth classes (sneak around, use bows for long-range attacks, and so on) include the Ranger and Nightshade from Hibernia, the Scout and Infiltrator from Albion, and the Hunter and Shadowblade from Midgard. These classes are perhaps the most difficult to play solo and are designed with an eye toward the realm-versus-realm (player team-versus-player team) combat at the high levels.

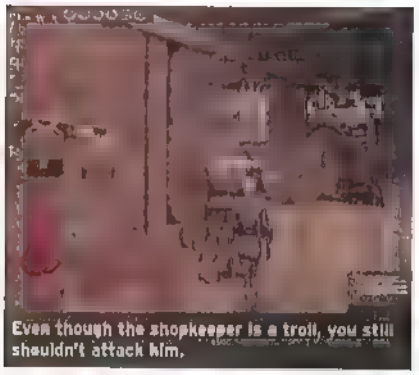
Good Soloing Classes

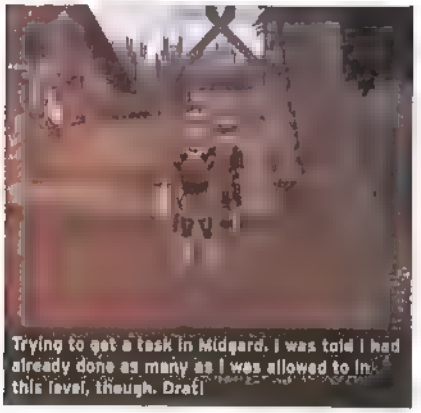
Although these massively multiplayer games are designed with group play in mind, players often find themselves fighting alone, or soloing, quite a bit. The good news about *Dark Age* is that all of the classes solo well at the early stages. Of course, some solo better than others. The pet classes are a good bet if you like to play alone a lot, as are some of the other hybrid classes, like the Friar and Shaman. The pure spellcasters are tricky because they simply can't melee worth a dang. A solo Wizard has to just about kill his target before it reaches him, which involves carefully setting up the combat. The stealth classes are tough, too. They can melee better than the spellcasters, but they are still relatively weak.

Good Grouping Classes

All classes can contribute, but healers and fighters are the most common choices for


This Ratboy tried to kill me but I ran away. Hopefully he'll go aggro on someone else.


Even though the shopkeeper is a troll, you still shouldn't attack him.


Trying to get a task in Midgard. I was told I had already done as many as I was allowed to in this level, though. Drat!

grouping. If you want to be popular, be a healer. You'll never lack for invitations to group, and you can likely level up much faster than other classes simply by joining higher-level groups. Every group needs a few fighters too, so you'll be in constant demand if you play one.

Solo Tactics

When you solo, you have to be a bit more careful than when you play in a group. First tip? Fight things you can beat. Click on a monster to see how powerful it is relative to you. Monsters with names in gray are worthless—don't bother with them, as you'll get no experience points or loot. Green names are easy to beat but give little XP. Blues are tough but beatable. Yellows are dicey—your tactics better be sharp, and even then you may not win all the time. Oranges are very tough, and reds and purples are virtually impossible to solo.

Our second tip has to do with something massively multiplayer veterans call *aggro*, slang for the acting out of aggression on the part of the monster. Some monsters will aggro toward you if you come within their range, though typically you have to get close for this to happen. In other words, if you wander too close to a monster, it may aggro on you and attack. This is bad news for the weak melee classes like pure spellcasters, who may be swarmed by monsters and will be unable to get spells off. It's also bad news for anyone soloing a monster if other monsters aggro and decide to crash the party. Monsters will aggro due to proximity and damage—say an area-effect spell you cast on one monster that inadvertently hits another nearby. Also, some monsters are clever and will call for help from other monsters, like goblin lookouts. So the lesson here is be careful in what you attack.

Third tip: Know when to run. Watch how fast your health is dropping relative to the monster's health. Do a quick estimate in your head of which will disappear first. If it's yours, hit your sprint hotkey and run before your health drops below 50 percent or else you may not get away; you'll be hit a time or two as you begin to run, and at about 25 percent health, you run too slowly to get away. It also doesn't hurt to set up a hotkey with a text macro—something like "For the love of God, I'm getting slaughtered here! Please help me!" or maybe just a plaintive "Help please?" If another player is nearby, they may jump in and rescue you.

Beyond these tips, tactics vary from class to class. Wizards have to be at the far end of their spell range when engaging in combat because the monster will begin to close in when hit with that first fireball. Pure fighters just walk up and start whacking. Thanes first cast spells on themselves to boost their power and then cast a direct damage spell on the monster to draw it into melee combat. Know the strengths of your class and use them to your advantage to solo.

Group Tactics

Roles in groups tend to be stratified. Clerics can do a fair amount of damage with their smite spells and melee attacks, but in groups the Cleric will usually just stand in the back and heal the other group members. Wizards that would cast spell after spell when soloing will pick and choose their spellcasting moments with more care when in groups.

Aggro also plays a big part in group tactics. While groups might happily take on three or four monsters at once, they still don't want too many "adds" (as they are called), because things can get out of hand. Further, aggro directed at individual group members can be a problem for a group. That Wizard simply cannot take much damage, so a couple of monsters that are angry at being sizzled with fireballs may turn on the Wizard. Players in a group need to be aware of this and attack accordingly. The monsters aren't dumb, either. They see healing done to other players as damage done to themselves. So if a healer gives, say, 150 points of health to three fighters while the fighters have done only 100 points of damage to the monster, the monster will aggro on the healer and attack him. Groups need to maintain a delicate damage balance so that the monsters stay aggro on the fighters instead of spellcasters and healers.

Aggro plays a part in pulling, too. In groups one player is usually designated as the puller. The group stays in one spot, and the puller then finds the monster and attacks it, pulling it while they run back to the group. Naturally, the monster will initially go aggro on the puller. If the puller is a Wizard with a long-range fireball, the fighters have to whack the monsters quickly enough to switch the aggro from the Wizard to themselves, or else the Wizard will be monster dinner.

Quick Tips

Fast leveling: Without a doubt, getting in a good group and fighting orange, red, and even purple monsters is the quickest way to level. You get an XP bonus for grouping, and if you're hunting monsters that are from a camp, you'll get a camp bonus as well. Use the Looking For and Available options to find groups.

Quests: Always visit your trainer after you make a level to see if any new quests are available. The town crier is another good source of quests, although any named NPC may also have one. Quests often give you helpful magic items, as well as money and XP. Also, if others are doing the same quest, you can group. You will all get the quest item (check your inventory after killing the monster). But each player must receive the quest from the NPC.

Tasks are a great way to solo and make quick progress. Target an NPC and simply type "task"; if the NPC has a task, you'll get it. Merchant NPCs will give you delivery tasks and NPC guards with names will give you combat tasks. Deliver the package to complete delivery tasks, and kill the monster and return to the guard to finish combat tasks. Tasks give you lots of money and XP. Type "/tasks" to get a reminder of your current task.

Pray: Beginning with level 6, you lose XP when killed (about 10 percent of what it takes to make a level). You can gain back half of the lost XP by returning to where you were killed and praying. Target your gravestone and type "/pray" to recover some of the lost XP.

Interface: Don't forget that you can move the windows around and change the alpha settings. You can make some windows almost transparent this way. Also, don't forget that you can have a group mini-window displayed so you can constantly check the health of your team.

Weapons and armor: Right-click on the items in your inventory and note the color of the text you see. Blue is ideal for your level; green and gray are too low and you should think about buying new stuff. When you buy, choose orange or yellow items if you can. They'll last longer before they become ineffective, though they will be costly. Also, smiths will repair your items for a fee. Select the smith and then hand over each item. They will reappear in your inventory or equipment slot fully repaired, and the fee will automatically be deducted.

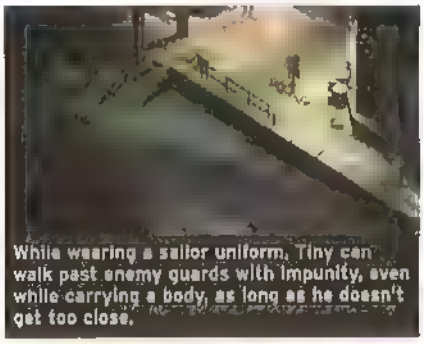
Torch: Use the T key to turn your torch on and off. You won't be able to see at night with it off.

That's it. Now don thy armor and dispatch some monsters!

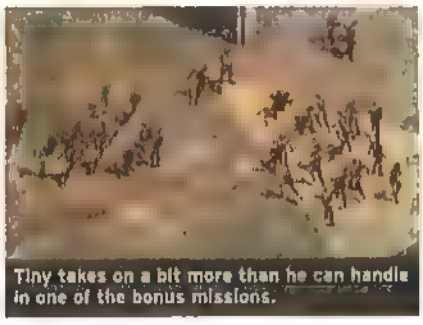
Commandos 2: Men of Honor

Be meaner than the Dirty Dozen with these tricks By Jason Kapalka

A bonus mission has you sabotaging Japanese fighters on an aircraft carrier.



While wearing a sailor uniform, Tiny can walk past enemy guards with impunity, even while carrying a body, as long as he doesn't get too close.



Tiny takes on a bit more than he can handle in one of the bonus missions.

There's one thing Pyro didn't change in this spectacular sequel to *Commandos*: Both games still get really, really tough. As in screaming-at-the-monitor, smashing-your-face-into-the-keyboard, slobbering-and-crying-for-mercy tough. Here are some tips and tricks to help you smash the Nazi forces, or, when all else fails, cheat your way to success.

Nicotine: The Silent Killer

Enemies may be unable to spot your Commandos when they're crawling through their dark-green vision cones, but those same enemies have eagle eyes when it comes to noticing the beloved packs of cigarettes They'll spot the cigs at the same range they ignore your creeping killers.

Use this to your advantage by laying deadly traps with cigarettes as bait. There are a number of ways to finish the Nazis off after they take the lure. You can place a bear trap near the smokes, string a wire trap across the path just before the precious nicotine, or simply have Tiny or another sneaky fighter placed to bushwhack the foe when he stoops to grab the cigarettes. If you dispatch them quickly, they won't even have time to light up and you can reuse the cigs on your next victim.

In a pinch, a bottle of wine will work to draw guards' attention as well, and if you put sleeping pills in it first, they'll really knock themselves out

Spy Games

The Spy is extremely useful for infiltrating enemy compounds, but he's even better when used in conjunction with other Commandos. The simplest trick is to have the Spy start talking to a guard, who will then focus his gaze in the Spy's direction, allowing Tiny or another Commando to sneak up behind. If you're wearing an officer uniform, you can order guards to move to a new position nearby. You can't move them very far with each order–but you can issue the order repeatedly until you've marched Fritz down a handy dark alleyway where a few of your pals are lying in wait.

Speedy Hog-Tie

Stunning opponents is often a good idea–it's quiet, and you get a bonus for nonlethal disposal of your foes–but it can take a while to finish tying up guards once they're knocked out. You can speed the process up by Shift-double-clicking on a guard's body when your Commando has started to tie him up. He'll immediately toss the guard over his shoulder, shaving valuable seconds off your tying time.

Crowd Control

You can assign your men to groups, just as in RTS games like *StarCraft*, by pressing Alt and a number from 1 to 9. This assigns anyone you have selected to a group, which can then be activated by pressing Shift and the same numeral key. Useful grouping tips: Put all your Commandos in one group at the beginning of a mission so you can quickly rally them for escapes later on, or group allied NPC soldiers into squads for easy maneuvering.

The Dog of War

Whiskey, your trusty hound, doesn't seem to have much offensive use, though he's extremely helpful for passing items back and forth; just load him up with whatever items you need transferred and have another Commando blow his whistle–the faithful mutt will come running in seconds, no matter what the distance. There is a way to use this canine commando in a more aggressive fashion, though. When he barks, he makes so much noise that enemy soldiers in his radius won't hear anything else, like, say, one of

Web Über Alles

Commandos 2 Unofficial Game Guide
www.walkthrough-online.com/gameselect/commandos2
Features detailed [illegible] mission.

Commandos DropZone
www.strategyplanet.com/commandos
Nicely organized site with features like improved manuals and complete lists of all bonus book locations.

Commandos MI6
www.intpisrv.net/titrude/MI6home.html
Home of many *Commandos* and *Commandos 2* mods and variants.

Official Eidos *Commandos 2* site
www.eidosinteractive.com/support/search.html?gmid=78
A bit clunky and hard to navigate, but hey, it's [illegible]

their nearby pals shouting out as he gets knifed in the back.

Guarding Made a Bit Easier

It can be tough to get people in the right guard position just by pressing X, the default guard key.

It's easier if you activate their weapon first (F for rifle, G for pistol, and so on) and rotate them around with the mouse until they're facing the direction you want before putting them into guard mode.

Unlimited Ammo

On any mission with Allied soldiers, simply borrow their rifle and replace it with an enemy model. The Allied soldiers' rifles have infinite bullets, giving you as many shots as you like, and the Allied soldiers don't use up the ammo in the Nazi rifles when they fire.

Uniformity

While the Spy is far and away the best at disguising himself with enemy uniforms, it is possible to have your other Commandos go temporarily undercover as well. Although they can't get away with the up-close shenanigans the Spy or Natasha can, they're able to walk around in spots you'd otherwise be forced to crawl through, which means you can safely carry bodies through a guard's field of vision.

Unfortunately, there are a number of things to worry about when a Commando other than the Spy dons enemy garb. First, the disguise will be effective only in the long-range dark-green radius of a guard's view—any closer, and the guard will see through it. Second, the uniforms have a time limit on their effectiveness; when they wear out, watch it! And finally, some uniforms will not fit your Commandos properly. Check the length of the coat sleeves to see if you have the right size. The Thief usually fits in worker duds, while the Driver and Sniper seem best suited to enemy sniper uniforms, and Tiny does well with sailor uniforms. Note that some high-ranking officers and SS troops will not be deceived by any uniforms and that all guards will become suspicious if they see you running while in disguise.

Elephant Riding

Only the Thief can ride an elephant. Steer it with the arrow keys (the mouse won't do anything). Pressing Shift will speed you up. This works for other vehicles as well—at the higher speed, you can also run over enemy troops.

Unconventional Forces

Sick of earning the next mission the old-fashioned way? Then it's time for some truly sneaky tactics, e.g. cheating. Here are the codes to access any of the 10 missions on Normal, Difficult, and Very Difficult levels. Just type these into the Keyed Mission field on the game selection screen.

Normal	Difficult	Very Difficult
1. Night of the Wolves		
XHGDR	PLKUM	PVTSL
2. Das Boot, Silent Killers		
WKUC4	JE5SH	5KDJF
3. White Death		
YSM51	DFY3B	3DYNG
4. Target, Burma		
B7D8F	K9D3H	9BG3S
5. Bridge Over the River Kwai		
3GHSL	NMWQ9	KJWJK
6. The Guns of Savo Island		
AZLM1	16G3L	E2J7H
7. The Giant in Ha phong		
JAH5G	WL3CZ	ZX78Y
8. Saving Private Smith		
UN63A	LPQ6T	TRIB4
9. Castle Co ntz		
VAZ2P	5RCM8	TRD78
10. Is Paris Burning?		
9TT5W	PAEN8	1LPQD

And for even more unsportsmanlike conduct, try right-clicking on a command and then typing "GONZOANDJON" followed by the Enter key (you won't see any text onscreen while you type this, but it will activate God mode). Once activated, the following keys will let you wreak high-powered havoc on your Nazi opponents:

Shift-X ... Teleport to cursor
Ctrl-V ... Invisibility
Ctrl-Shift-N ... Win Mission
Ctrl-Shift-X ... Kill All Enemies

Free Bonus Missions

There's a tweaky feature that lets you access most of the bonus missions without collecting the books scattered throughout each level. When you've completed a mission and are looking at the screen showing the puzzle pieces collected, press ESC and L simultaneously (*exactly* at the same time, or it may not work), and you should be launched into the bonus mission for that level. In conjunction with God mode, you should be able to rapidly access any of the bonus missions you might have missed out on. The only exception? The "Saving Private Smith" bonus stage, which is an extension to the regular mission rather than a completely separate level.

To activate the "Saving Private Smith" epilogue, which is really cool, you need to find six bonus books, located as follows:

- Two are in the house where Tiny, the Green Beret, is imprisoned.
- One is in the house where the Sapper is located.
- Two are in the house with the Sniper.
- And the final one is a bit trickier. It's in the crashed plane in the river. (You can dive to reach it or get in with a welding torch found in the house where Tiny was imprisoned.)

CHEATS: Rails Across America

Just type these in at any time to get the intended effect.

CODE	EFFECT
ADDVENTURE	Adds $10 million in cash to player.
BOOMBOOM	Adds a sabotage to the currently selected track for x weeks (default is four) so "boomboom 10" will do 10 weeks.
CHATTERBOX	Als chat every time they have the option (instead of one-tenth of the time), and they pay no attention to the once-every-three-months rule.
DEECEE	Stocks your hand full of Government cards. Specifying a number will add only that many (up to the maximum), so "deecee 5" will add five Government cards to your hand.
GREEN$PAN	Economy moves to reasonable growth with low interest rates (economy goes to steady growth, interest rates are lowest available for that economic state).
HAMPTONS	Stocks your hand full of Money cards. Specifying a number will add that many (up to the maximum), so "hamptons 5" will add five Money cards to your hand.
HOOVER	Economy instantly drops into depression.
IACOCCA	Immediate exit from bankruptcy.
JOHNHENRY	Removes all Safety inspections and Sabotages from the currently selected track.
OHCHICAGO	Stocks your hand full of Labor cards. Specifying a number will add that many (up to the maximum), so "ohchicago 5" will add five Labor cards to your hand.
OSHA	Adds a safety inspection to the currently selected track for x weeks (default is 4), so "osha 10" will do 10 weeks.
SKUNKFARM	Stocks your hand full of Dirty Trick cards. Specifying a number will add that many (up to the maximum), so "skunkfarm 5" will add five Dirty Trick cards to your hand.
SOTHEBY	Forces the next failed shortline acquisition effort to go to auction.
STEAMED	Adds N scandal-risk points to target player (N defaults to 20), so "steamed 12" adds 12 scandal-risk points to the target player.

Civilization III

You've got questions, here are some answers By Tom Chick

FIG 1

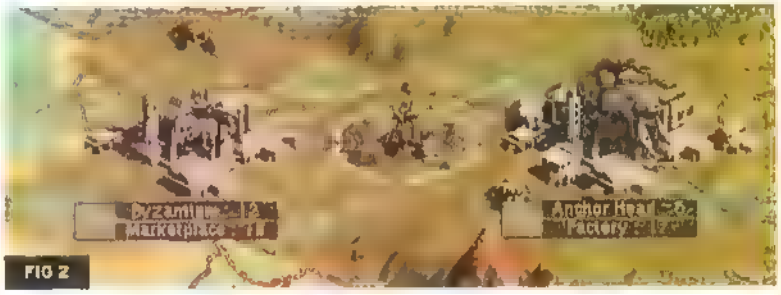


FIG 2

FIG 3

FIG 4

FIG 5

Civilization III is a big game with a big manual and a big Civilopedia. But even then, you'll probably still have some questions. We sure did. Here they are, complete with answers

Your Friends and Neighbors

Q: How can I win friends and influence civilizations?

A: Climbing the scale of diplomatic regard from furious to gracious is more of an art than a science. Pay attention to the global culture groups. Some civilizations have an inherent favorable disposition to each other. Civilizations are also friendlier toward the same government type. Note which wars a civilization is fighting and join in to win them over, even if you don't actually commit troops. Study the column of possible offers on the right of the diplomacy screen to get an idea of what the other civilization needs in terms of resources and technology. (Note that you can change sums of gold by right-clicking directly on the offered amount.)

Q: What are the tiny gold dots on the Foreign Advisor screen?

A: They mark civilizations with whom you have an embassy. You'll also note a gold dot in the star beside a civilization's capital. **(FIG 1)**

Q: Is there any way to tell how much longer a diplomatic agreement or trade deal will last?

A: Go to the diplomacy dialogue for the appropriate civilization, choose the option to propose a deal, and then click on Active at the bottom of the screen.

Growing Pains

Q: Even though a resource is clearly located within my city's radius, I can't seem to use it. Why not?

A: A strategic resource or luxury still has to be connected to a road, even if it falls within a city's radius.

Q: What are those puffy bursts of smoke over my city? Are they anti aircraft guns?

A: Those are fireworks for "We Love the King Day." The effect is basically that corruption in the city is lowered.

Q: What's with these Golden Ages?

A: You get only one per civilization per game. It happens automatically the first time you meet one of the two criteria (build the appropriate Wonder or win a battle with your unique military unit). Keep in mind that although later Golden Ages might generate more shields and commerce, they take place at a time when everything's more expensive. Earlier Golden Ages tend to have a proportionately greater effect.

Q: Railroads don't seem to be working as advertised. What gives?

A: Don't believe everything you read in the Civilopedia. Railroads add one food to tiles with irrigation or one shield to tiles that are mined. **(FIG 2)**

Fighting the Good Fights

Q: It's hard enough to get units to elite status, but that next step to leader seems awfully elusive. Why can't I get my elite units to become leaders?

A: It's not easy. Although Firaxis wouldn't give us any specifics, they said the chances of a unit upgrading from elite to leader are low (although these chances are increased if you're playing a militaristic civilization). Early in the game, find a barbarian village and park your elite units outside for combat practice. In the later game, keep track of your elite units and use them in battles you're guaranteed to win in order to maximize their number of victories.

Q: Privateers are really lame. Their attack value is only 1, but every other ship in that period has a defense of at least 2. What am I supposed to do with them?

A: Blockade harbors and choke points to keep civilizations from moving goods overseas. Since your regular navy will blockade only a supply line when you're at war, privateers are a great way to interfere with other civilizations' strategic and luxury goods without having to go to war with them. **(FIG 3)**

Q: How does bombardment work? Why do I miss sometimes?

A: Bombardments are resolved like normal combat, with your artillery or plane's bombard value matched against the target's defense. Terrain improvements and city populations have a theoretical defense value for the purposes of calculating bombardments, so you'll sometimes miss.

Under the Hood

Q: How can I improve my chances of planting a spy?

A: Success at this is determined by the type of government you have and whether there's an intelligence center in the target civilization. Intelligence centers are indicated by a pentagon beside a city's name. Note that for each time you fail, there's a negative modifier on additional attempts for several turns.

Q: How can I improve the chances of my spy's action succeeding?

A: As with planting spies, type of government and the presence of intelligence centers play a prominent role. Also, the closer a city is to you, the greater your chance of success.

Q: How can I tell how much science it costs for an advance?

FIG 6

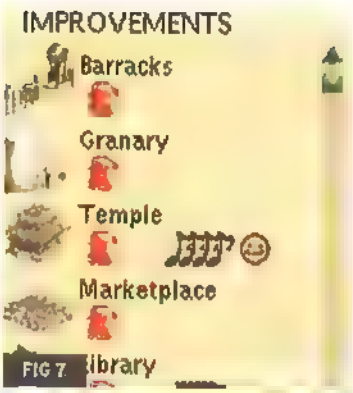


FIG 7

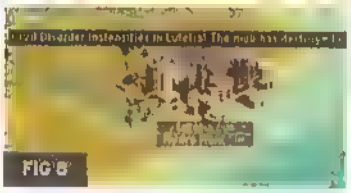


FIG 8

A: This isn't a constant number, so Firaxis doesn't include it in the game. Technologies get cheaper when other civilizations learn them. Also, note that when you complete research, excess science doesn't carry over to the next technology. When you're a turn or two from discovering a technology, you can tinker with your science/tax rate to funnel money into your treasury that would have otherwise been wasted.

Interface Quirks

Q: What does it mean when the number indicating a city's size is yellow or red?
A: Red numbers indicate starving cities. Yellow numbers indicate cities with zero growth. **(FIG 4)**
Q: Is there any way to delete an item from a queue?
A: Select the item in the queue and press the Delete key.
Q: Is there an easier way to set up my production?
A: Press Shift and right-click on a city to change production from the map. Or just right-click on the city's production column in the Domestic Advisor screen. **(FIG 5)**
Q: How can I find out where strategic resources or luxuries are located?
A: Anything located in your territory is noted on the Trade Advisor's screen. You can also use the Clear Map command (Control-Shift M) to remove cities and terrain improvements. You won't see a strategic resource until you've researched the technology that unlocks it. You also won't see it in another civilization's territory unless you've traced a line of sight or gotten a map through diplomacy.
Q: How can I find a particular city by name?
A: The city list (Shift L) is a list of all cities for all civilizations in the order that they were founded. With this list open, you can press any letter to cycle through your cities with names beginning with that letter.

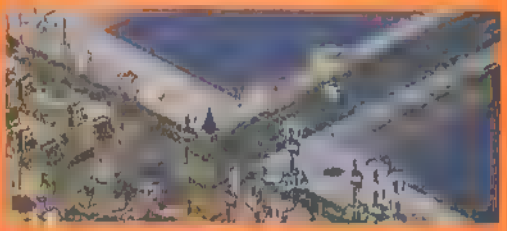
Pen and Paper Sold Separately

Q: How can I keep track of all of my elite units?
A: Unfortunately, there's no provision for this in the game. Because elite units are a significant part of your military, and because they'll most likely always be in short supply, it might be worthwhile writing down where you keep them. Note that you can manage many other aspects of your military from the Military Advisor screen. Set the list to View by Unit and you'll be able to right-click on units to wake, disband, or upgrade them. **(FIG 6)**
Q: Barracks are important for upgrading my units and for building new units with veteran status. How can I find my cities with barracks?
A: There's no way to do this short of going through every city's management screen. As with elite units, it helps to keep a written list. **(FIG 7)**
Q: I want to make sure my units will wake when an enemy moves adjacent to them. How can I sentry them as I did in *Civ II*?
A: Unfortunately, you can't. But the computer will always show you the movement of other civilizations' units in your line of sight (this can make for a fair amount of waiting if you've granted your neighbor a Right of Passage agreement, so think twice about granting these in the later game). It's worth jotting down a tick mark on a piece of paper every time you see an enemy move within attack range of your units. Then, as you take your turn, cross-hatch each tick mark so you don't accidentally overlook any threats.

This is also a handy way to keep track of cities in disorder. The game doesn't provide a way to get a list of cities in disorder, and you certainly don't want to leave them that way, so make a tick mark for each city as it reports disorder. Then you can make sure you don't end your turn until you've taken care of all of them. **(FIG 8)**

Dirtiest Trick o' the Month

Well, the Dirty Trick drought has hit us once again. The closest thing we have to a workable Dirty Trick (again, *please* stop sending us tricks for *StarCraft*!) is the following on how to partner up with someone to cause massive mayhem in *Command & Conquer: Yuri's Revenge*.



Now that you're finally done with *Red Alert 2* tips, it's time for—what else?—*Yuri's Revenge* tips. From my experience playing extensive Battlecian games, here are some of the most lethal team strategies available.

A) Without the problems of unallying, you can "borrow" any structure your ally can build. If you have a target to which to redirect your link when you are done with it, borrowing works great as long as you don't need your Yuri Prime for other things. (If you built Yuri Prime after getting a vat, you'll have two. You can also borrow your ally's Battlelab to make something such as a Crono Legion.) The most important structure to borrow when playing with an allied teammate, however, is the Cloning Vat: This allows you to produce very cheap Guardian GIs at double the normal production rate. If you are coordinated with your ally and relatively close, you will be able to cut down the cost of a maxed-out Guardian Battlefortress. To accomplish this, you need only hold down the Force Fire key (Default of Control) while targeting your ally.

B) You can put your units inside of your team's allied Battlefortress units, and they will operate perfectly from within. In fact, one of the most potent unit combinations is four Yuri Clones and one Psionic inside a fort. Clones will capture any standard unit that attempts to attack you, while the Psionic keeps infantry hordes and the very pesky hero units away from your vehicles. Back this up with some Guardian GI Battlefortress, and you will be able to roll most conventional armies. Your one problem is facing Yuri units, which can turn your own equipment back on you, though any already mind-controlled units will remain under the control of your team's Yuri player.

C) When facing down Yuri forces that play for mind-control dominance, you can still turn their own forces back on them (using this tactic in conjunction with robot tanks is ideal). Have your ally move forces into your base, where you should have some well-protected Yuri Clones waiting. Use the clones to dominate the Yuri Fortresses (and Guardian Fortresses) and then send them against the enemy. If your partner doesn't mind letting you control the action, the advantage is simple: A mind-control a unit already under control, which makes a large part of Yuri's forces completely useless.

–Robert Riter

Well, at least it's for *Yuri's Revenge* instead of *Red Alert 2*, so Robert will be snagging *EverQuest Trilogy* soon. Keep on playing and being sneaky!

By Steve Hemmesch
Kohan game designer at Timegate Studios

Kohan: Ahriman's Gift

Your insider's guide to the new *Kohan*

Since *Kohan: Ahriman's Gift* offers an extension of the gameplay already found in *Kohan: Immortal Sovereigns*, most of your strategy in *KIS* still applies to *KAG*. This guide focuses on the differences in *KAG*, detailing new units, [illegible] and strategies.

New Units

[illegible] extra cavalry unit.

[illegible] Slow and expensive, it's [illegible] extensive [illegible] construction and supercitadel [illegible] defensive upgrade, and was designed to work against [illegible] turtle [illegible] against [illegible] weaker [illegible]

Council Units

[illegible] Archers. Their armor [illegible] infantry.

[illegible] battle to battle without rest.

[illegible] its potency. [illegible]

[illegible] Units

[illegible] them for extensive mobile strikes.

[illegible] priests with an area-effect damage spell. Use them to support units with high armor (Dragoons or Grenadiers) to create a company that's extremely hard to kill.

Elementalists, or Elite Mages, have the most powerful destructive spell in the game.

Meteor. Use this spell to add artillery support to any cavalry or heavy infantry in the company.

Nationalist Units

Disciples are infantry focused on power and speed, with the ability to inflict Khaldunite damage as well. Use these guys as counters to Skeletons, Shadow Beasts, and Shadow Knights. Be careful, because their armor is lower to allow for speed and power; they're quite vulnerable against Archers.

The Fanatic is the first priest to engage in psychological warfare. He lowers enemy morale, making the target go nuts and attack its own troops (good against fearless Ceyah troops). He can also cast Berserker's Rage, which boosts friendly attack values and reduces morale loss. He tends to cause enemies to panic.

The Invoker is an Elite Mage who can sheath his entire company in a ring of flame, making it almost invulnerable. A single company of powerful frontline troops with one Invoker can chew through weaker companies composed of Shadelings, Rhaksha, or Footmen. The Invoker is less effective against magic-resisting troops (Gauri) or companies of power relatively equal to his.

Ceyah Units

Shadow Knights, a new type of infantry, have an attack that ignores the armor of their targets as well as any defensive spell bonuses. Use them against other factions' Elite units as well as against stronger, Priest-supported enemy companies. Be careful, though, as they're still susceptible to Khaldunite weapons.

The Acolyte is an Elite Priest with many support bonuses. First off, he can suppress inherent vulnerabilities in Shadow units, making them less vulnerable to Khaldunite and holy attacks. Use the Acolyte to help your company against Paladins, Battle Priests, and any Elite unit. Lacking defensive spells, he's easy to flank, so be careful.

The Macabre, which is similar to the Necromancer, can summon creatures (a pair of Shadow Beasts) and inflict penalties upon its foe. Use Macabres as you would Necromancers: to support Bone Bow companies and slower moving infantry, or pair them with Shadow Knights.

Changed Units

The Sorceress has received the significant addition of a magic-resistance support bonus. All troops in the company take 25 percent less damage from magical attacks when supported by a Sorceress.

Footmen have had their Cavalry Foe bonus increased to +5, making them more viable defensive units against raiding Lancers, Dragoons, and Shadow Beasts. This bonus has also been applied to the Village Militia of Marsten settlements.

Dragoons have had their cost increased and speed slightly reduced. They are still very powerful but no longer quite so troublesome in the early game.

Elite Bowmen, the Elite Archers of the Council faction, have had their rate of fire increased and damage slightly decreased. They also received an increase to their melee combat ability. They are deadlier than they were before and survive flanking maneuvers a bit better.

Slaanri Units

Slaanri Warriors are the main unit of the new Slaanri race (a smarter version of *Kohan*'s Slaan). Their high armor lets them take a lot of punishment, and their upkeep is inexpensive. This lets them survive a lot more battles and gain experience, allowing for regiments of Veteran Slaanri Warriors to be strewn all across the map. Their main drawback is that they lack the high morale of Drauga, Gaury, or any other advanced Maraten unit.

Slaanri Mystics, a secondary support unit, start by entangling the enemy with the local flora. Then they summon giant wasps to engage the enemy; they are quite deadly when paired with an Archer company. They're best used mixed in with player regiments to hold off enemy troops who haven't reached melee range, or to prevent enemies from routing or retreating.

Terrain

Snow tends to slow movement by about 40 percent, but it doesn't affect combat in any way. Snow Mountains create impassable terrain, while the Snow Forest creates 45 percent slower movement and provides a +4 defensive bonus.

Enemies

Drauga Berserkers are simply Drauga adapted to the colder climate. They raid everything they can and are good defenders; consider them as dangerous as bandits, though they are not routed as easily.

Giant Wasps, while individually weak, tend to attack en masse and inflict poisonous damage (which lasts quite a long time). These guys kill most unwary settler, scout, and engineer companies.

The Ice Drake is almost as large and powerful as a Fire Drake, but possesses a deadly breath weapon. All units caught in the breath are frozen solid, receive a hefty amount of damage, and are left helpless for any follow-up attacks.

Game Types

King of the Hill is the first new game type. There are a number of special shrines, also referred to as flags, that can be taken over by any player. The number of flags depends on the size of the map and the type of game the players wish to have. The fewer flags that exist, the more direct the contention over the flags will be, which extends the game. To set up the game, you choose a number of flags and set a target score. Each flag on the map gives up one point every five seconds to the player that currently owns it. Therefore, the fewer

Buildings

Ahriman's Gift introduces the ability to upgrade existing outposts to tougher, stronger buildings called Forts. A Fort increases the radius of supply, and it houses twice the militia of an outpost. These features allow players to set up better defenses and cover wider areas in which previously there was no room to settle. A line of Forts is very difficult to cross without a number of Maelstrom Engines paving the way.

Slaanri units have their own independent village, like the Haroun and Drauga. Slaanri villages hold four component slots and allow the recruitment of Slaanri Warriors and Mystics.

Slaanri units also have a smaller independent village, called a kraal. Slaanri kraals hold two component slots and add one to the company limit of the player.

Components

The Royalists get the workshop, an upgrade to the market that provides the player's kingdom with +6 stone, +6 wood, and +6 iron. This allows the Royalists, who are often very short on open component slots early in the game, to support enough troops to take advantage of their large company limit.

The astrology hall was altered to protect the settlement. It is built to withstand Magical and Khaldunite damage attacks. This makes it useful against an enemy that is fielding a lot of Maelstrom Engines or Magicians to capture cities. The hall still provides the increase in visual range and the +2 Mana upkeep.

The masonry guild has had its repair rate increased by 66 percent.

The supply post received a minor upgrade. It no longer requires the resources used by its basic component, the barracks. This provides a small economic boost when upgrading to the supply post.

The factory was overhauled quite a bit. It now returns the resources used by the market, still gives up +10 gold per minute, and has had its supply range reduced slightly. This makes the factory a good alternative to the bank for Nationalist towns that need to extend their supply without taking an economic hit.

The wizard tower has had its mana production benefit increased to provide +3 mana, and has kept its damage reduction against all non-magic attacks.

flags, the lower the target score should be, unless you want a long game.

Strategies for this game type include the following:

- Build a company of scouts and swordsmen and blitz for the flags as early as possible because every point counts.
- Quickly place outposts around any flag you control; this is important to prevent enemy players from running in and tagging the flag while you are dealing with their armies. As an outpost placed near enough to the flag will automatically attempt to capture it should the enemy take it away, you should always build the outposts to forts.
- Settling near a flag can also be very useful. Not only does the settlement's militia defend the flag, but you can recruit right by your front line to make retaking the flag easier (the cities have a small population zone that prevents you from settling too close).
- Try to take as many flags as possible. Holding multiple flags for short time gives you points faster than holding one flag for a long time. Then you have established a lead, you can focus your defensive efforts on fewer flags.
- Another strategy is simply to ignore the flags, build a massive army while the other players are flanking over the flags, and then sweep in and take all of your opponents out one by one. You'll get all the points you need when no one else is left to take the flags from you.

The Turtle game was born from requests for longer, more epic games—games that could not be won with just a quick blitz strategy. In Turtle, settlement militia have all of their attributes significantly increased. It becomes extremely difficult to capture settlements, particularly cities and citadels. Players are encouraged to settle quickly to increase their kingdom and to reserve outposts for increasing supply where settlements are not feasible. Walls and their Fortified Wall upgrade are very useful, making it extremely difficult to capture such settlements. Heavy hitting of support units like Magicians, Wizards, Wraiths, and Maelstrom Engines becomes almost necessary to crack the defenses of some kingdoms. Instead of building fast armies designed to sweep around the map quickly, picking off usually weak back-line settlements, it's more prudent to recruit slow-moving, firepower-laden armies and slowly creep your way into the enemy.

New and Refined Strategies

One popular strategy is to push for a high gold income early in the game. You can settle quickly and build banks or iron exports in your first villages. You'll go negative in stone and can use the high gold income to compensate. The advantage of building this style of economy is that with a high enough gold income, any resource can be compensated for in times of need. If you need a company that uses lots of stone, you can build it and use the gold to offset the negative. Or you can support it with your own stone if you have a decent amount of ore. Ominously, you can use that company right away with pikes, blacksmiths, and your Cleric (this gives you more flexibility in what you can recruit and frees up component slots early on for components that provide early support with the library). By aiming for a high gold economy early, you also prepare your economy to be able to support large numbers of troops and sudden-opportunity expenses, like those for building outposts or awakening heroes. In team game, one player focusing exclusively on either Council or Nationalist can provide strong support to their teammates and the focus of their military.

[illegible] with [illegible] settling [illegible] you should always settle [illegible] Many start/corner points (four front lines) that [illegible] to settle [illegible] the starting [illegible] (the last unit needs only one HP) and then settle [illegible] fast. [illegible] you can [illegible] settling a couple of times [illegible] they may not settle companies (1 gold/unit strategy) that are finished settling [illegible] the [illegible] company.

[illegible] playing [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

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Greenspeak

King of the Slackers

Yeah sure, I'll have the column to you tomorrow, promise **By Jeff Green**

You know what sucks about being the boss of this rag? Being the boss. I am so not an authority figure; even my 7-year old knows it and laughs at me.

Some boss responsibilities are easier than others. Buying Krispy Kremes for the Monday morning meeting: check. Weaseling a free Xbox out of Microsoft: I'm on it. But trying to get guys here to turn in their work on time and not play games all day? Three words come to mind: *pot, kettle,* and *black.* Question: If the man in charge has not made one single deadline in five years at this magazine, what is the incentive for the rest of the staff to try? Answer: Shut up and start a *Wolf* server.

***

I try to make my deadlines, I really do. Every month I promise Dana, our frighteningly efficient managing editor, that I'm going to get this column in on time. I'd be better off promising that someday it will rain donkeys. This very column you're holding in your hands right now? It's two weeks late as I write this. That's quite an achievement on a monthly magazine. If I procrastinate a bit longer, I may actually finish next month's column first—if I don't manage to get fired beforehand.

That's what being a hardcore gamer is all about—avoiding responsibility.

But that's the problem. That won't happen. Because I'm the boss. Because I can't fire myself. Because if Dana yells at me for being late, I could actually just fire *her* instead. I suppose I could yell at myself, which is what I do on the train ride home every night anyway so no one sits near me. But I don't scare myself enough for that to actually accomplish anything.

In the good old days, when I was just a peon here, I'd routinely get yelled at for not doing my work on time. And the fear of not being able to work here anymore was always just the incentive I needed to stop playing *Heroes of Might and Magic II* and get something done.

You may wonder how someone who gets paid to play games all day can get in trouble for playing games all day. Good question. The sad truth is that the all-American, self destructive urge to rebel and not do one's work does not change, even on a gaming mag. The best way to do that here is to play games other than the ones you're *supposed* to be playing. For example, every time I sat down to play *Zoo Tycoon* for my review this month, I had to fight the urge to play *Stronghold* or *Dark Age of Camelot* instead, because I wasn't writing about those games. *Zoo Tycoon* was my *job* the last couple weeks, so, by definition, I didn't want to do it.

I know—this is pathetic. But that's what being a hardcore gamer is all about, man—avoiding responsibility. If I actually liked to work for a living, well, I'd be working somewhere else.

In truth, I am the ideal boss for *CGW*. I've been slacking for years, and I can do it better than anybody. Young guys like Tom Price and Wil O'Neal, sitting around playing the Xbox instead of turning in their work? Poseurs. Wannabes. As soon as they get yelled at by Dana, they scurry back to their cubes, chastened, and do their work. It's embarrassing. It betrays everything that *CGW* stands for.

***

So that's why, as boss, I am instituting a new policy around here. To keep our edge, I am going to demand that the rest of the team live up to my standards. No more "efficiency." No more "getting things done on time." Sissy time is over.

Play games all day, avoid doing your work like a real gamer, or pack your things and get out. Now somebody start a *Wolf* server, dammit. I've got a magazine to run.

What Jeff doesn't realize is that the rest of the staff secretly works on PowerPoint presentations when he's not looking. Stick it to The Man at jeff_green@ziffdavis.com.

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